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SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

By

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Basal Beliefs of Christianity.
The World a Spiritual System.
Can we Believe in Immortality?
The Coming of the Lord.
Is the World Growing Better?
The Personality of God.
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Sunday School Lessons, Seven Annual Vols.

SNOWDEN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS

EVANGELICAL AND UNSECTARIAN

OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS, IMPROVED

UNIFORM SERIES: COURSE FOR

1928

BY

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

SEVENTH

ANNUAL VOLUME

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New York

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PREFACE

These lesson expositions follow the subjects suggested by the International Lesson Committee for adults and young people and the intermediate and senior grades. The treatment can be adapted by the teacher to all grades down through the junior and primary. The Bible text used in this volume is that adopted by the International Lesson Committee, the American Standard Edition, which as a more accurate translation serves in itself as a textual commentary in many points. The use of this copyright text has been specially granted for this volume by Thomas Nelson and Sons, its authorized publishers.

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SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST QUARTER

Characteristics of the Gospel by Mark

Mark's immediate purpose is to set forth Jesus as the Son of God, the note he strikes in the very first verse: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." In Matthew Jesus is the mighty Speaker, but in Mark he is the mighty Doer.

On every page he is doing great deeds that show forth his divine power and Saviourhood.

It does not appear that Mark is writing specially for either Jews or Gentiles, but is proclaiming that Jesus is mighty to save. He appeals specially to men of action. Mark's gospel is stamped with characteristics that sharply distinguish it from the others.

It is *realistic* in the direct vision and apprehension of the facts of the life of Jesus and *graphic* in its style.

Mark sees and says things just as they are without any effort or thought of smoothing them off or toning them down. A rapid reading of the book gives one a vivid impression of this feature. He calls Jesus a "carpenter," has the people on first hearing him at Capernaum exclaim, "A new teaching!" and tells how his family declare of him, "He is beside himself," or is crazy. These realistic touches appear on every page.

There is an urgency in the book that is characteristic. The words "straightway" and "immediately" occur more than forty times and indicate the rapidity and eagerness with which Jesus passes and almost rushes from one work to another.

This urgency is characteristic of the impulsive nature of Peter and reflects his spirit in the narrative.

The frequent use of the present tense in the narrative is another mark of its realistic style, the author telling events as though they were present before him as he writes.

These characteristics are indications of the historicity of the book as being inimitable, and also accord with its being the earliest gospel written under fresh knowledge and experience of the facts before tradition had begun to pale their colors and dim their sharp outlines.

They are indications that Mark saw through the eyes and wrote with the hand of Peter, whose understudy he was.

THE IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES COURSE

for 1928

FIRST QUARTER

THE GOSPEL OF THE SON OF GOD

STUDIES IN MARK

(First Half of a Six Months' Course)

Aim: For Intermediates and Seniors: To develop in the minds and hearts of the pupils a higher appreciation of Jesus' character and ministry as set forth in Mark's Gospel, and a deeper loyalty to him as Lord and Master.

For Young People and Adults: To discover, through a study of a series of vivid pictures of Jesus' deeds of power and of his teachings as contained in the Gospel of Mark, the basis of the writer's conviction that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

LESSON I—JANUARY 1

John the Baptist and Jesus

Intermediate and Senior Topic: John Prepares the Way for Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: John Heralds the Mighty One.

Golden Text: He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:20.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 40:3–11.

Lesson Passage: Mark 1:1–13.

Lesson Text: Mark 1:1–11

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 Even as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way;

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight;

4 John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.

5 And there went out unto him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and *had* a leathern girdle about his loins, and did eat locusts and wild honey.

7 And he preached, saying, There cometh after me he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I baptized you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit.

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him:

11 And a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Preparation in the Wilderness.

2. An Eccentric Preacher.

3. A Startling Sermon.

4. A Sign of Cleansing.

5. A Heavenly Blessing.

Beginnings are always interesting and important and most important of all is "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." On the first day of the new year we begin this study and its list of topics for the next six months shine out like stars upon the calendar.

May they throw new light upon our path and be our stars of guidance and inspiration and hope.

1. Preparation in the Wilderness

Preachers need to be prepared for their work, as do all other men, and John the Baptist found his theological seminary out in the wilderness. Nothing had been heard of him for thirty years during which he had been growing up in the hill country of Judea in that seclusion and silence where all great things grow.

John was a Nazarite, we might call him a monk, a man who had withdrawn himself from society and for years lived a solitary life in the rocky regions around the Dead Sea.

His life was near to the earth on its material side, but on its spiritual side it was close to the sky: for he lived in meditation and prayer.

His life was a reaction against the formal hypocritical religion of his

time. Disgusted with Pharisaic show and sham he turned from the Jewish church into the wilderness: not that he might have less religion, but more, that out there in the solitude far from men he might get close to God, as Moses did in the mount.

Let us not be afraid of the wilderness; of seclusion from the madding crowd and the silence in which we grow and ripen our souls.

All great souls have grown in that solitude which is the mother country of the strong.

2. An Eccentric Preacher

At length, being filled with the Spirit, John suddenly emerged from obscurity and appeared down on the banks of the Jordan where he began to preach. His striking personality, rough haircloth robe bound about his loins with a leather strap, uncut hair, flowing beard, and deep-set burning eyes, suggested a prophet.

The news reached Jerusalem that there was a prophet down at the Jordan, and the crowds went pouring down the steep rocky roads to hear him. The excitement spread, and the people flocked to him from every quarter.

What was the secret of the preacher's power? Not his odd manner of dress and strange appearance. Eccentricities never made a Martin Luther or a John Knox.

Long hair does not make a long head.

John the Baptist was a sincere soul touched with the fire of God. He had got rid of empty forms and dead conventionalities and was speaking out his genuine beliefs and deep fiery emotions.

Instead of mumbling traditional dogmas, John was speaking living truth from the heart.

Such preaching created a tremendous sensation and drew people in great throngs. They had been fed on empty husks long enough and wanted bread.

The dessication of our creed is ever one of the greatest dangers of religion.

When the spirit evaporates out of it and leaves it dry and dead, it becomes so much chaff fit only to be burned up or blown away.

We need to keep the sap circulating through our creed and ever breathe the holy breath of God that our faith may keep full of fresh vitality and fruitfulness.

3. A Startling Sermon

The burning message of John was repentance as a preparation for the Messiah, who was about to appear.

Repentance is the reaction of the soul against sin.

The Greek word means "a change of mind," a mental act that turns the mind and will away from sin. It is thus in its root not an emotion but a volition which we can exercise and for which we are responsible. It is a perception of guilt that grows into a pain and overpowers our love of sin.

Such repentance prepares the way for Christ in our hearts and lives.

Sinful moods and motives, passions and pursuits, are obstructive and antagonistic to the presence of Christ in the heart and must be uprooted and cast out before he can come in. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

John also quoted Isaiah to prove his message had ancient authority and divine sanction. The truth he was preaching was not revolutionary but evolutionary; the new grew out of the old and was its blossoming and fruitage.

Isaiah was the original: John the echo; Isaiah delivered the message of repentance: John brought it up to date and applied it.

4. A Sign of Cleansing

As an outer sign of inner repentance, John instituted and administered the rite of baptism.

The outer sign represents and confirms the inner act and roots it deeper in the soul.

At this point in John's preaching, Jesus appeared in the audience and offered himself for baptism. John hesitated to administer the rite to him. "I have need to be baptized of thee," he said, "and comest thou to me?" (Matt. 3:14.) But Jesus persisted, saying, "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

There was some reason why Jesus submitted to this ordinance.

He needed it and would not have been perfect without it. It was not a fictitious performance done for mere show, but a genuine baptism.

We must take this view of the whole life of Jesus.

There was no acting or theatrical display in it, but everything in it was real, just what it purported to be. His growth in wisdom was a true process of education. His temptation was not a sham battle but a real fight.

The life of Jesus was genuine in every act and utterance, and there was not a word in it said for effect.

The baptism of John was appointed of God, for John was a prophet. It was therefore binding upon all those that acknowledged God and meant to keep his commandments.

Jesus was under the law, and therefore under obedience to the ordinances of religion. These rites he observed from his circumcision in infancy down to the Passover under the shadow of the cross. Not one of these means of grace did he refuse or neglect.

He did not treat them as being subject to human convenience and taste, but as being of divine appointment and obligation.

He did not maintain that because he was holy he did not need these ordinances, but because he was holy he kept them perfectly.

This example of our Lord shows us the necessity of religious ordinances and the duty of observing them.

Objections are made to religious rites as being unnecessary mechanical forms: only the spirit is life. Undoubtedly the inner spirit is the life of religion, but can we have the inner life without having the external form? At least, can we have it in the same degree of fulness?

Can we drink water without using the cup that holds it? Can we have fruit without having fruit trees? We may have trees without fruit, but not fruit without trees. So we may have ordinances without true religion, but not as good religion without ordinances.

Dangerous as are ordinances, we must have them.

Jesus always put vital emphasis on the inner life of religion, but he never did away with its outer means; on the contrary he used them

himself and enjoined them on others; and whoever declines to use them cannot quote the example and sanction of the Lord Jesus.

The exact meaning of baptism in the case of Jesus needs to be carefully discriminated. As a sign of remission of sin Jesus did not need it, for he had no sins to be remitted. But the rite was also a sign of entering the kingdom of God, a mark of consecration to his service, and in this sense Jesus could and did receive it.

Jesus, then, in being baptized showed that he was in the kingdom by accepting its appointed sign, by wearing its badge or uniform and marching under its flag.

Baptism applies to us as a sign both of repentance and pardon and of entering the kingdom.

Baptism is the sign of cleansing, but not the cause of it, for forty baptisms could not wash away one sin. And by this act we also enroll ourselves among the soldiers of Christ and take our place in his ranks under his flag.

We give proof and our pledge that we are willing to do his will and thus to fulfil all righteousness.

5. A Heavenly Blessing

Jesus came up out of that baptismal water a new man into a new world. The heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him and filled him with the fulness of God.

The Spirit that Moses and Isaiah had received in limited measure and fragmentary gifts, he now received without measure and the Godhead dwelt in him bodily.

Then came a voice from heaven, saying, " Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

This probably marked the moment when Jesus became fully conscious of his divinity and Messiahship.

Into the mystery of this moment we cannot enter. What glad recognition of the Father, what trembling sense of responsibility, what mighty throb of joy, what overpowering sense of his tremendous endowment he experienced we cannot know. But through all the days of his ministry and temptation and darkness he must have been made strong and glad with this assurance.

This great blessing came out of his obedience in receiving baptism.

Jesus probably had no expectation of this gift when he offered himself for this ordinance. He was then simply doing his duty in fulfilling all righteousness. But he faithfully obeyed it, and, lo, this humble duty suddenly blossomed and bore this wondrous heavenly fruit! Had Jesus never gone down into that baptismal water, he never would have come up under an opened sky with the Holy Spirit streaming down upon him, and God never would have pronounced him his Son.

We never can tell how near we are to an unexpected blessing when we are performing a duty, even the humblest.

Saul went out to find his father's lost asses and he found a kingdom and came home with the anointing oil on his head. Columbus set sail only to find a shorter path to poor old China, and he stumbled upon rich and splendid young America.

The larger purposes of God catch up all our little thoughts and deeds into his great plan and may turn them to world-wide blessing.

Little did the father of Matthew Henry, when at family worship he was making homely comments on the Word of God, know that he was training up a boy who would one day write commentaries that would long feed the world.

Atoms are very little things, eluding the power of our strongest microscopes to bring them within the range of our vision, but enough of them make the continents and the stars, and a single one of them may be a center around which revolve the constellations.

The humblest act faithfully done may be the doorway into the greatest gift of God.

The act of confessing Christ before men may seem to us unimportant and unnecessary, and yet it may go deep into our lives and may be the door that will let others into the kingdom, or a light that will shine far in the world.

Let us not hesitate at any of God's ordinances or commandments or opportunities, but, however trivial or unnecessary or hard they may seem, fulfil all righteousness, and then, as we come up from the service, we also in some degree shall see heaven opened and the Spirit of God descending upon us, and shall know that we are his beloved sons in whom he is well pleased.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the teaching of Scripture as to the necessity of preparation for service?

2. What other men have found it necessary to go outside of the church to find pure religion?

3. In what ways are we to prepare the way for the coming of Christ?

4. Are eccentricities in person and method in Christian work to be cultivated and emphasized?

5. Give other instances of how faithfulness in humble work has led to great blessings.

LESSON II—JANUARY 8

Jesus and the Sick

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Shows His Sympathy and Power.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus' Power to Make Whole.

Golden Text: He hath done all things well; he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. Mark 7:37.

Devotional Reading; Psalm 103:1–8.

Lesson Passage: Mark 3:21–45.

Lesson Text: Mark 1:21–34

21 And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught.

22 And they were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes.

23 And straightway there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

24 Saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

28 And the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about.

29 And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell him of her:

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons.

33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34 And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and he suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Jesus Went to Church.***
2. ***He Took Part in the Service.***
3. ***He Healed an Afflicted Man.***
4. ***Out of the Church into a Home.***
5. ***From the Home into the Street.***

How to observe the Sabbath day was one of the chief practical questions and troubles Jesus had in his relation with the Jews; and the same problem confronts us and ever grows increasingly difficult of solution. Times change so that old rules fail to apply or to work when they are applied. New occasions modify old duties as well as teach new ones.

Nevertheless, the day of rest and worship is not less but more important and necessary in our swift-moving, high-pressure life. This lesson paints the picture of one busy Sabbath in the life of Jesus and it throws the light of some general principles on how we should observe it.

1. Jesus Went to Church

First, he straightway entered into the synagogue; in the morning he went to church. Jesus honored the synagogue as his Father's house and attended its services for worship. Though himself Lord of the sanctuary yet he was also a worshiper in the sanctuary.

The church is the school of our higher life.

Here we become conscious of our deepest needs; here sin is seen in its vileness, and holiness in its beauty; and here is revealed and offered to us the great gospel of mercy and love by which we may be saved.

All the questions of life are illuminated in the house of God.

We do not see any subject rightly in all its connections and consequences until we see it in a religious light, from God's point of view. The farm and factory and store sustain our physical life; the school and press feed our intellectual life; but the church sustains our spiritual life. It points its spire towards the sky, a finger feeling after the Infinite and Eternal. It stands for righteousness and reverence, prayer and praise, a Father above and a home beyond. Take these thoughts and hopes out of life, and all else falls to the level of the dust. Put these in, and then life rises to the supreme heights and grows rich and strong.

A ship was wrecked on an island in the Pacific, and the sailors feared they might fall into the hands of savages. One of them, having climbed a bluff, called back, "Come on, Boys, here's a church." Why did those men feel safe after seeing that church? "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

The church means safety, purity, peace, fellowship, eternal life.

But may we not be religious without going to church? Jesus did not think so. "Straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue."

People that can be religious and righteous without the church must needs be wiser and holier than the Son of God.

2. He Took Part in the Service

Next, Jesus, being in the synagogue, took part in the service. The synagogue service was social worship, like our prayer meeting, in which the people were free to take part. Jesus was not a mere passive listener, but he expounded the Scriptures and proclaimed the gospel. He not only received something from the service, but he also gave something to it, and thus increased its interest and power.

Some people appear to think that worshiping is doing nothing, and in their case they may be right; but genuine worshiping is working, being alive and active in every faculty of the soul and receiving and giving holy influences.

Every one should have a part in the service and speak or sing or pray.

The people were astonished at his doctrine, and well they might be, for both in matter and manner it was a great and welcome change. They had been bored to death by the scribes. These fossilized ecclesiastics were droning away over hairsplitting questions of orthodoxy that were not of the least human interest or use, and were repeating with interminable prolixity the traditional sayings of the rabbis. Across this dry parched wilderness of rabbinical lore came the simple charming teachings of Jesus like a fresh breeze and shower of rain. The people knew what he was talking about and were surprised that it took hold of them with fascinating power.

Nothing else is so interesting as religion when it is properly presented, and it is by far the most popular subject in the world to-day.

The authority with which Jesus taught consisted, not in any dogmatic claims or dictatorial air, but in his spirit of absolute and transparent truth, certainty, sincerity and earnestness. He spoke that he did know and testified that he had seen, and candid minds could not help but believe his witness.

When one's religious faith is the very core of his heart, so that it is, in the words of Carlyle, "the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe and his duty and destiny therein," he can teach in the church and out of it with authority and power.

3. He Healed an Afflicted Man

The service was interrupted by a loud cry of pain and terror from a man in the congregation possessed of an unclean spirit. The presence of Jesus seems to have excited the evil spirit, for the spirit of goodness often stirs up wickedness as the light seems to intensify the darkness. The unclean spirit discerned in Jesus the destroyer of evil and wanted to be let alone. With furious outcry it warned him off, while bearing witness to his holy character.

Jesus would not let the evil spirit alone, but rebuked it, saying, "Hold thy peace (literally, 'Be muzzled,' a word for a beast), and come out of him." Then the spirit, screaming and tearing the unhappy man with convulsions, came out and left the man calm and free.

A murmur of amazement swept over the excited congregation as many exclaimed, "What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits and they obey him."

A new teaching! Jesus a teacher of new theology! He did not keep to the old paths of the scribes and Pharisees, the doctors of divinity and professors of theology of his day, but he dared to be original and struck out into new paths.

He revised and rewrote the religious teachings of his church and kept the process going of ever bringing religion up to date abreast of all revelation and knowledge and experience.

Jesus not only taught in the church, but he also cast out evil spirits and healed men. His doctrine was not a finespun theory and sentimental speculation remote from practical affairs and human needs, as preaching too often is, but it was the sword of the Spirit that smote sin and sent incorrigible spirits of evil cringing and screaming back in the infinite darkness whence they came.

The gospel must be not only preached in the church, but also applied.

We must get rid of the notion that sitting in the synagogue is religion.

Worship must make war on wickedness. It is the business of the church and of Christians to cast out uncleanness and not let one evil spirit alone.

A church that does not stir up evil spirits, much less cast them out, has lost its divine commission and is an impertinence among men. We should not fear but welcome "new teaching" that has power to cast out unclean spirits.

Thus Jesus spent this Sabbath morning in the church.

4. Out of the Church into a Home

What did he do next? "And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John." Out of the church into the home. And what did Jesus do there? Just the same kind of work he did in the synagogue: he healed Simon's wife's mother of a fever; he blessed that home.

We do not see much of the home life of Jesus; in truth, he had no home, nor where to lay his head. But when we do find him in a home we always see it made better by his presence: a sin is forgiven, a dying child is healed, or a dead brother is raised to life.

Christ's religion was not something that he had left in the synagogue, but it was holy healing power that went with him wherever he went, radiating its beneficent virtue.

There is a close connection between the church and the home. However many miles may lie between them, they touch each other in their inner spirit. What we are in the one, we are in the other. Worship cannot be shut up in the church, but must go out with us. Religion is preached in the church, but it must be practiced everywhere, especially in the home. The close of worship is only the beginning of work.

"Is it all done?" asked a man, coming up to the door of a church at the close of a service. "No," was the answer, "it's all said and now it is to be done."

If we get any good in the church, it ought to show itself speedily in the home. Some sick one should be ministered to with a kinder hand, more patience and gentleness should mark our behavior, beautiful courtesies should be more abundant, new Christlike graces should bloom out in our lives.

The home should be the brighter and sweeter on Monday morning and all through the week because we have worshiped on the Sabbath in the church.

5. From the Home into the Street

The day closed with a wonderful scene. The city gathered at the door, and the sick were brought until they filled all the street, and Jesus healed them. He picked his steps amidst their beds of pain and every touch of his hand or glance of his eye brought relief and health.

His mercy, that in the morning manifested itself in the synagogue and in the afternoon filled the home, in the evening overflowed into the street and filled the city.

The stream of beneficence once started in the church did not stay its flood until the whole city had been bathed in its healing tide. The love of God is expansive and has in it a wideness like the wideness of the sea. There is no danger of its ever running short, and it will reach the greatest sinner and the last lost child.

Our religion, having flowed out of the church into the home, must not be confined there or anywhere, but must overflow into the street and through the city and around the world.

It must invade and pervade social life and business and politics. It must clean up the streets and slums into sanitary condition and build sanitary houses. It must enter the business office and the factory and adjust industrial relations into justice and good will. It must take an interest in politics and go to the polls and elect good men to office.

It must turn all life into worship so that whether we eat or drink, buy or sell, pray or play, we shall do all to the glory of God and the welfare of men. A great need of the world is to have the spirit and power of Jesus diffused through all its classes and conditions and relations.

Such was this eventful Sabbath in the life of Jesus, and it is a pattern for our day of rest and worship.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we make our church-services more interesting and attractive?

2. In what sense should we have "new teaching" in the church in our day?

3. Can we heal people in the church?

4. What are some faults in our home life that the Christian spirit should correct?

5. How can we carry the gospel out into the city?

LESSON III—JANUARY 15

Jesus and Sinners

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus the Friend of Sinners.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus' Power over Sin.

Golden Text: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Mark 2:17.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 32:1-2, 5-7, 10-11.

Lesson Passage: Mark 2:1-17.

Lesson Text: Mark 2:3-12, 15-17

3 And they come, bringing unto him a man sick of the palsy, borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay.

5 And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, *even* God?

8 And straightway Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy),

11 I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.

12 And he arose, and straightway took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

15 And it came to pass, that he was sitting at meat in his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and publicans, said unto his disciples, *How is it* that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17 And when Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***A Helpless Paralytic.***
2. ***Four Friends.***
3. ***Obstructions Block the Way.***
4. ***The Paralytic Walks off.***
5. ***Jesus at a Dinner Party.***
6. ***Critical Scribes.***

A missionary journey through Galilee connects the busy Sabbath of the last lesson with this busy day in Capernaum. No sooner had Jesus returned than the people began to gather, pouring into the house and blocking up the street.

Christ could not be hid; and he cannot be hid to this day.

This miracle illustrates the nature of sin, the need of human help, and the power of divine salvation.

1. A Helpless Paralytic

While the people were thronging to Jesus, there was one man lying upon a bed in some neighboring house who could not come. He was afflicted with the palsy, his nerves were paralyzed, and he could not move.

There are more palsied people than we think.

This terrible disease is quite common, in fact, universal. People that never imagine they have it may yet be smitten with it in its worst form. How often is men's sense of justice and right palsied in their dealings with one another? It does not hurt them to overreach and defraud one another because that particular moral nerve has lost its sensibility. How often are the nerves of truth and charity palsied in our social relations, and the nerves of affection and unselfishness in the home?

Many of our moral nerves are working feebly.
The sinner is palsied in his sense of sin and of God.

The spiritual nerves that see the really great things in life, that perceive the beauty of holiness and thrill with the life of God, are paralyzed. It is pitiful to see one helpless with physical palsy and it is often a sight to move one to tears.

But if we only had the insight to see a paralyzed soul, we would have infinitely more reason for pity and would see helplessness which only a higher power can cure.

2. Four Friends

This higher power came to this paralytic first in the form of human help. Four friends, strong men who had in them some of the strength of God, took up the four corners of his bed and carried him to the great Healer.

We must carry one another in this world.

When one looks at his life, he sees that he is being carried by many others in various ways. If he is about to make a journey, he is virtually powerless to go himself: four or forty or four hundred men must carry him by automobile and railway and steamship to his destination.

Many are helping us in building our houses, weaving our garments, and making our bread. Men of genius bear us into regions of higher thought and finer sensibilities; the thinker with his ideas, the poet on the winds of his imagination; the musician with his chords and songs; the painter with his brush. Thousands and millions of people have hold of us and are carrying us each one; if they were to let go, we would fall and perish.

Social life depends on our "being borne of four." So is it in the spiritual life.

We are not isolated from others and saved by ourselves, but each one is saved through others. Through man came sin, and through man also comes our salvation.

Every saved soul has been brought to Christ through the sympathetic tones of a human voice and the warm grasp of a brother's hand.

Bearing palsied people to Christ is our great mission in life.

3. Obstructions Block the Way

Obstructions were encountered in bringing the palsied man to Jesus.

A crowd blocked up the way.

What disappointment must have been experienced by the four faithful friends, and what despair must have been depicted on the pale wan face of the helpless sufferer as they found they could not get near.

There are obstructions in the way of every good thing.

One cannot march straight to wealth, education, skill, or attainment of any kind, without running into them. There is always a crowd of other people ahead of us who want the same thing. Life is a conflict, and every victory costs a battle.

Healing from the hand of Christ is no exception.

There is a throng of people around Christ, and going to him involves publicity. This public confession of sin and faith is an obstruction with

many. In the crowd around Christ may be worldly companions who will say things that will cut like a lash, and this is hard to meet. There are also unworthy Christians that are stumbling-blocks in the way of others.

We may imagine in the barrier around Christ the sinner's evil habits and disposition, the things he will have to fight with to get rid of; there are his doubts and fears. The devil himself is in that crowd.

What did these four men now do?

Did they stop at the edge of the throng? Did the palsied man himself say, "It's no use trying to get there; there's no hope for me; take me back home"?

No, they were not men of such stuff. With them it was a matter of life and death and a moment for brave action. If they could not get through that crowd they might get over it.

And so they got their man up on top of the flat-roofed house, just over where Jesus was; and then, tearing a hole through the light thatch-work, they let the bed with the sick man right down at Jesus' feet. And thus by the valor and triumph of their faith the sinner and the Saviour were brought within speaking and touching distance.

We need more of the resourceful masterful faith and earnestness of these four men.

They were not stopped by matters of dignity and conventionality; and it would be well for us to use every means and, if necessary, tear the roof off to get our lost friends to the Saviour's feet.

4. The Paralytic Walks off

Human help has gone as far as it can, and now divine power must intervene. "Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy."

Seeing their faith, he saved the other man.

The salvation of a soul has many links and is interwoven with many causes. Our faith is a factor in saving others. It overflows into other lives and may work unknown to us.

"Son, thy sins are forgiven." Jesus struck right through the man's palsy into his sin; he did not seem to see his palsy at all, but only his guilt. His palsy was a mere symptom on the surface, a blotch on the skin.

The root of his trouble was in his heart.

To have cured him of sickness and let his sin go uncleansed would have been of little consequence. Jesus was always looking deeper than the body and never stopped with the clothes people wore or the state of their health. He came to destroy evil at the root. He would set man right at the core, and then all things else will right themselves and the issues of life will flow pure.

The palsied man at the word of Jesus rose and walked off, carrying the very bed that had carried him.

With the use of his feet he got the use of all his powers and was a free man. The way to get better institutions, laws, sanitation, education, distribution of wealth, is first to get better men. These better conditions will not necessarily make better men, but better men are sure to make better conditions.

The world has need of scientists that can grapple with the unseen assassins of disease and of statesmen that can give us better laws; but its greatest need is a Saviour who can strike through all these outer symptoms to the core and root within, saying, Thy sins be forgiven thee.

5. Jesus at a Dinner Party

In the course of time Matthew made a great feast in his own house (Luke 5:29), and a great company of publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples. This feast was no ordinary dinner party, but a great social function and the "great multitude of publicans" and "sinners" implies a general gathering of this class of people; possibly scores or even hundreds assembled in the spacious court of the tax collector's house.

It looks as though Jesus used Matthew as a means of introduction to this class of society.

Jesus was not an ascetic, standing aloof from the joys of the world in tacit disapproval, but he shared in all human festivities, made wine at a wedding and sat with men at their feasts. The man of sorrows was acquainted with grief, was also anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

Yet even at this dinner party he had a religious end in view and so was working out his mission.

He was burrowing down into these lower strata of society in order that he might put under them the lever of the gospel. He associated with the lowest classes, not that they might drag him down to their level, but that he might lift them up. He did not come to slice the loaf of society horizontally and save the upper crust, but to slice it vertically from top to bottom and save every part of it. Jesus met these hated tax collectors on their own ground as a man among men in pleasant social intercourse, and thus gained their confidence and good will.

Thus he was carrying out his mission whether he was at a place of business or at a place of pleasure, at a wedding or a funeral, and wherever we go we should take our religion with us and turn every opportunity to the Master's use.

6. Critical Scribes

This feast was an offense to the Pharisees and scribes greater than the call of Matthew the tax collector into his company of disciples and amounted to a public scandal.

All their principles and precedents of social decorum and decency were outraged by such conduct.

They were quick to make their criticism known to the disciples, stinging them with the taunt, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" Their self-righteousness had crystallized into that cold hardness of heart in which they despised others and counted themselves defiled if even the shadow of a "sinner" fell upon them as they passed along the street.

We must beware that this blind and foolish and wicked spirit does not lurk in our hearts.

It is pleasing to our pride to count ourselves better than others and think that we must keep separate from the common crowd. But this spirit is in deadly antagonism with the spirit of Christ, and a proper sense of our sin and unworthiness will burn it out of us.

This criticism was reported to Jesus, and he made a reply that cut it up by the roots.

He laid down the principle that they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The physician would disown his mission

and defeat his professed end if he forsook the sick and associated only with the well. Jesus took the Pharisees on their own ground and rooted his action down in common sense. They were as inconsistent and absurd in their practice as a physician that would set up a great medical establishment and yet refuse to receive or see a patient.

In so far as we profess religion and maintain an exclusive and unbrotherly attitude towards sinners, even the vilest, we are guilty of the same absurdity and bring upon ourselves the same condemnation.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Was this man's palsy caused by his sin?
2. Why are good people ever ill?
3. How can we remove social obstructions from the way of right living?
4. Was the healing of the paralytic an instance of faith cure?
5. Should we go into all kinds of society?
6. What dangers are there in criticism?

LESSON IV—JANUARY 22

Jesus and the Law

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Jesus Obeyed the Law.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus Declares the Higher Law.

Golden Text: Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Matt. 5:17.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:33–40.

Lesson Passage: Mark 2:18–3:6.

Lesson Text: Mark 2:18–22; 3:1–6

18 And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day.

21 No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but *they put* new wine into fresh wine-skins.

1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had his hand withered.

2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

3 And he saith unto the man that had his hand withered, Stand forth.

4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored.

6 And the Pharisees went out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against him, how they might destroy him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Fasting.

2. New Wine in New Skins.

3. Critics in the Synagogue.

4. A Thrilling Scene.

Jesus was a radical in his day in theology. We shall find him in these lessons repeatedly coming into collision with and trampling upon the doctrines and practices of the Pharisees and scribes, the Jewish doctors of divinity and dominant ecclesiastics.

This is a dangerous thing to do in any church and in any age, but Jesus did it with magnificent courage.

In the end it cost him his life, but it was thus he made room for his true spiritual religion and gave liberty and life to us.

1. Fasting

One of the points where he clashed with the Jews was their system of fasting. Fasting has been widely observed from ancient times as a means of religious grace.

Its idea is that by abstaining from food and reducing the whole bodily life to a lower level the spiritual life will rise and become dominant.

It came down to us and was observed by us until recent times. The Pilgrim fathers translated the text, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," into a Fast Day in March and a Thanksgiving Day in November. Properly observed the theory of the day is physiologically and psychologically and spiritually good and undoubtedly has been a means of grace.

It has fallen out of use with us, for times and customs change, and yet it may be maintained that it never was so much needed as to-day.

The life of the body in the gratification of the appetites and in the enormous craving and search for amusement and pleasure has gone far towards submerging the soul in the body and smothering the spirit in the flesh. We need to put a check and self-restraint upon our bodily life and intensify the life of the spirit.

If we have dropped public fasting, we would do well to practice it privately or to find some means that will serve the same purpose.

The ancient Jewish law enjoined only one yearly fast day (Lev. 16:29-31), but the Pharisees and scribes had multiplied the one into many. Twice a week was their rule and boast, and though they had ways of evading their own regulation they imposed it imperiously on others.

What was thus in the beginning a good thing in time became a bad thing by having all the spirit evaporated out of it and being hardened into a harsh rule carried beyond all use and reason.

This is a danger with all religious ordinances: they may lose the spirit and retain the outer ceremony, the grain drops out and only the husk remains.

Jesus disregarded this system of fasting and this brought upon him the critical question of the disciples of the Pharisees, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?"

It was a fair and not a captious question, and Jesus proceeded to answer it fairly.

His first answer was, "Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day." The point is plain. Jesus was now with his disciples and it was their joy and his that they should be together as teacher and disciples, or as bridegroom and bride. Fasting, a symbol of sadness and sorrow, was out of place in such a time. It no longer fit and was an incongruous thing.

The virtue of the symbol consisted in the inner feeling which it expressed, and when this feeling was not present the symbol was useless and insincere.

The time would come, however, when Jesus would leave his disciples and they would then fittingly and sincerely observe the outer sign of their inner feelings.

The principle is one of wide application.

All ordinances are of the nature of outer symbols or signs of inner feelings and are worthily observed only as they are accompanied with this inner reality. When the inner spirit is gone the outer forms remain only as dead husks and harmful restrictions which may actually bind and dry up the very spiritual life which they were devised to nourish.

The Pharisees had done this very thing with their multiplied rites, and Jesus took measures to prevent this spiritual defeat by adopting few ordinances and making them as simple as possible.

And yet a multiplicity of ordinances gradually crept back and grew up in the Christian church until they outrivalled the Pharisaic rites of

old. We are still confronted with this danger whether our ordinances be many and spectacular or few and plain and we must strive to keep the inner feeling and the outer fact in complementary harmony.

The immediate point of application that Jesus made of fasting was that there is a fitting time for everything, a time to weep and a time to rejoice, and we should observe the rule of congruity and fit our outward acts to our inward feelings and not confuse times and seasons, pretending to weep when we are rejoicing, or to be merry when we are sad.

2. New Wine in New Skins

Jesus proceeded further to explain and defend his practice by two homely illustrations. The first was drawn from patching an old garment with a piece of unfulled cloth. The patch would shrink and make the rent worse.

This illustrates the unwisdom of trying to mend old, worn-out religious forms with new modes of faith and worship.

The two may be so incongruous that they will not fit and work together but only destroy or nullify each other. Christianity could not be a mere patch of new cloth on the old garment of Judaism, and we are sometimes confronted with the same condition and problem to-day.

Sometimes the old creed has become so antiquated and outworn that it cannot be simply revised and repaired at points, but needs to be rewritten and reconstructed throughout, and time and again the church has done this thing.

The other illustration presents the same idea from another point of view. New wine should not be put in old wine-skins, for the fermenting new wine will strain and burst the inelastic brittle skins. New wine in new wine-skins is the way to conserve new wine so that the new skins will have some elasticity to hold the fermenting new wine.

Again the idea is presented that the old forms of religion may not be adapted to hold new religious ideas and spirit.

The religion of the Pharisees was external and ritualistic, traditional and restrictive, leaving no room for growth; the religion of Jesus was internal and vital, free and expansive, a religion of life and liberty.

The Pharisees poured their religion into the mold of Moses and there let it cool and harden; Jesus boldly broke this mold and poured his religion into new forms of faith and life.

Judaism in the day of Jesus was already an old wine-skin that had lost its elasticity and grown hard and brittle. The new wine of Jesus quickly strained and bursted such an inelastic container. This was the very point of difference between Jesus and the Jews: their old wine-skins would not hold his living, expanding religion.

Judaism burst asunder and Christianity escaped into the free life of the spirit.

The same process has been going on down to our day. Time and again Christianity has hardened into a creed or ceremony or polity that began to restrict and constrict its free spirit, and then a crisis and rupture came.

The Reformation was such a rupture on a tremendous scale and the same crisis has come to many a church creed or polity.

It is the fermentation of new wine that has so often divided the church and formed so many creeds and is still revising and rewriting them.

Modern knowledge is constantly causing our religious ideas to ferment and expand and demand new forms of expression and life.

This process is not to be feared and opposed, but it is to be guarded and controlled, for it has its dangers.

The new container or creed may proves less adequate and secure than the old and much good wine may be spilled and lost. There are broken cisterns in religion that hold no water.

3. Critics in the Synagogue

We next find Jesus in a synagogue. Jesus went to the synagogue or church "as his custom was," not according to the weather or his sense of convenience, but according to the almanac and the clock.

His religion was ingrained in his habits, and he did not have to take care of it, but it took care of him.

Man needs worship equally with work, and the day of rest and worship fits these two needs.

The church ministers to our higher spiritual life, as the farm and the factory sustain our physical life, the school our intellectual life, and the home our affectional life.

We drop or neglect any of these fundamental needs at our peril.

There were different classes of people in this synagogue as there are in every church service, and among others there were those that "watched him" to see if he would do something of which they would not approve.

We could infallibly name them without looking at the record, and there it is written, "the Pharisees." They were there, not as worshipers, but as critics and faultfinders, not to worship themselves but to see how others worshiped, and their sinister eyes gleamed with the hope of catching Jesus in some trap. Blind to all good and watching with eager eyes only for evil, what a mean and malicious spirit was that to be rankling in the heart and poisoning the whole atmosphere and spirit of the very house of God!

This carping, faultfinding, evil-hunting spirit is bad enough anywhere, but it is at its worst in the church.

Trouble not the sanctuary with your criticisms. Go, not to watch others, but to worship God yourself. Only the pure in heart can see God and this evil spirit will blind the soul to him.

4. A Thrilling Scene

In the mixed congregation in the synagogue was a man with a withered hand. Possibly his infirmity had drawn him thither in the hope of receiving healing in the sanctuary where Jesus the great Healer was. There are always withered hands and burdened hearts in the church though we cannot always see them.

The church ought to have wide room and warm welcome for all afflicted ones and should have power to draw them in and heal them.

It was the hope of catching Jesus in the act of healing this man on the Sabbath day that the Pharisees were there to watch him. A thrilling scene was now enacted. Jesus read the thoughts of the Pharisees and knew the situation. He bade the man with the withered hand to stand forth and made him conspicuous before all the congregation.

He would do nothing in a corner, but always braved the open day. We must be willing to stand up before the world if we would have Jesus heal us.

Then turning to his critics he submitted to them the question whether it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to kill.

His intended act of healing was so self-evidently right and reasonable, so human and merciful, that he dared to submit it to his worst enemies, and they dared not answer him.

They were silenced but not convinced, for the conviction they were seeking was not the conviction of truth, but the conviction of Christ.

Then Jesus, looking round about on them with indignation and grief, said unto the man, "Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored."

By that act of healing Jesus broke the Sabbath of the Pharisees, but he kept the Sabbath of the Lord.

The Sabbath should be a day of healing with us. It should bring us to the sanctuary where Jesus is that we may stretch forth our withered hands and lift our troubled hearts to him; and then we should reach forth our hands that we may impart some healing influence and help to others.

Thus the Sabbath will be a day of life and light that will send its healing and gladness through all our days.

In the synagogue on this day there were three classes of persons and each found what they were seeking. Jesus found rest and worship and holy service; the man with the withered hand found healing; and the Pharisees found things to criticize and evil accusations to make.

People find what they are looking for; in the church we get just what we go to find.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why has fasting passed out of our life?
2. What may we substitute for fasting?
3. What are some of the criticisms now being made against the church?
4. How can we get rid of the faultfinding spirit?
5. These Pharisees went into the synagogue to find fault: what did they go out to do?

LESSON V—JANUARY 29

The Growing Fame of Jesus

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why the People Followed Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Secret of Jesus' Fame.

Golden Text: The common people heard him gladly. Mark 12:37.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 60:1–9.

Lesson Passage: Mark 3:7–12; 6:53–56.

Lesson Text: Mark 3:7–12; 6:53–56

7 And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and from Judea.

8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and beyond the Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him.

9 And he spake to his disciples, that a little boat should wait on him, because of the crowd, lest they should throng him:

10 For he had healed many; insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon him that they might touch him.

11 And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he charged them much that they should not make him known.

53 And when they had crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret, and moored to the shore.

54 And when they were come out of the boat, straightway *the people* knew him,

55 And ran round about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56 And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Prudent Withdrawal.

2. Multitudes Follow.

3. Jesus at the High-tide of Popularity.

4. Avoiding Sensational Reputation.

5. In the Land of Gennesaret.

From the synagogue where Jesus healed the man with the withered hand the Pharisees strode out to "destroy him." They were beginning to see that he was not their man. He cared nothing for their professional theology and artificial formalities, but dared to introduce new teachings and fashions in religion.

He shocked their fossilized conservatism with his progressive ideas and methods.

They were a proud caste that scrupulously kept themselves separate from others, but Jesus received all classes and even dared to eat with publicans and sinners. Their hypocritical, ostentatious religiousness could not brook his pure and humble spirit. His teaching was undermining their authority, and his popularity was loosening their hold upon the people.

They saw that they could not tolerate him and preserve themselves.

1. Prudent Withdrawal

His healing of the withered hand on the Sabbath was open defiance of their legalism and was the last straw that broke the back of their patience and they went out to make an end of him. Nothing less than his blood would wipe out his offense against them in their judgment. The men who thought it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath were themselves ready to commit murder.

Those that claim to be nearest to God and to have a monopoly of his authority may be furthest from him and nearest to the devil. The greatest crimes are committed in the name of religion.

The disposition may be still lurking in us to meet reason with force and righteousness with wrath. A man seems to be so completely refuted and silenced when his head is off.

Yet destroying the man does not destroy his argument and any truth he taught is immortal and will live to bless the world. It is hard for us to be fair towards one we do not like.

Jesus now withdrew himself with his disciples from the presence of these furious Pharisees. No principle of duty bound him to stay there and his presence might provoke a violent explosion. His work was not yet done and it was his duty to avoid having it cut short at this point when he could avoid it.

There is a time to withdraw from danger as well as a time to face it. The other side of bravery is prudence.

Courage may be rash and run into violence and disaster when wise caution would have kept out of it. We can avoid many a quarrel and escape many a danger by quietly withdrawing.

Jesus withdrew from the city, but not from service. He went from the inhospitable city to the hospitable sea, where he often went to quiet and rest his soul and bathe it in its mystic majesty and beauty.

2. Multitudes Follow

Jesus went to the seashore where he would escape from the professional ecclesiastics and was sure of a welcome from the common people and at least of a fishing boat for a pulpit.

Marvelous stories of the great Teacher's words and works and wonders had been wafted far and wide, and the people were flocking to him from every quarter. Not only were they coming from Galilee and Judea, but they were also pouring across the borders from neighboring Gentile lands.

Curiosity was now the main attraction.

Curiosity is not a high motive, but it is the entering wedge of knowledge and may open the way for higher ends. Mixed motives draw people to all places, including the church, but no matter if they are led on to faith and healing.

It was now evident that Jesus could not be hid.

He was meeting some great human need that was matching the human heart and drawing the world as by a great magnet.

It has been so down through the centuries and is so still.

What was the great subject of discussion and propaganda in the first Christian centuries? What turned the Roman Empire upside down and built churches all around the Mediterranean and assembled church councils and wrote the early creeds? What built the cathedrals of the Middle Ages and flowered out into its glorious works of art? What stirred Europe to its depths and started successive Crusades to the Holy Land and Jerusalem? What is still the central question of our modern world? Jesus the Christ.

Still are the people thronging to him in the hope that they may receive healing and help at his hands. Multitudes, "a great multitude" followed, and they follow still: there is a reason.

3. Jesus at the High-tide of Popularity

Jesus was now at the high-tide of his popularity. The people coming from every quarter crowded upon him until he was in danger from the throng and had his disciples hold a little boat in reserve for his safety. They had been "hearing what great things he did" and "came unto him." His fame as a Healer had spread far and attracted all kinds of sick and afflicted people.

He was proving his mission and power by the pragmatic test and fruits of deeds done.

The work of healing was now resumed on a large scale. They pressed near to touch him or to have him touch them and through his magnetic power unclean spirits were cast out, many of them bearing witness that he was the Son of God.

No other explanation would account for his words and works than divine personality and power.

We still live in a sick world. Never are we far from beds of pain and the moan of the sufferers is ever in our ears. A perfectly well person is rare and most people have some seeds of disease either active or dormant. And physical illness is only a symptom of a far deeper disease that has its germs and roots in the soul which infect every part of our nature with the poison of sin. The world is a vast hospital full of cases of every kind and in every stage of disease.

Is Christ still the great Healer in our world? Or was his beneficent influence only exercised on that far Galilean shore?

No, he is in the midst of our suffering and sorrowing world to-day even more widely and efficiently than he was yesterday. He heals the spirit of its sin and this is one powerful remedy for the ills of the body. The soul is so closely intertwined with the body that the condition of the one affects the other, and health of the spirit promotes the health of the flesh and will often act as a powerful antidote to disease.

Jesus is also present in and working through our whole modern system of medicine and sanitation and hygiene.

Science is his servant, whether it knows it or not. The physician has always been a coworker with the priest and minister, and the hospital

to-day is a child and annex of the church. The healing forces of nature are the medicine of God and are as truly the healing touch of Christ's hand as any work he wrought in Galilee.

Medicine is now a vital part of missions in every field at home and abroad.

Wherever the Christian missionary goes the sick and afflicted are presently "hearing what great things he did," and they come unto him for his healing touch and are not disappointed.

4. Avoiding Sensational Reputation

A significant note in the narrative is the statement that "he charged them much that they should not make him known." This was a frequent word uttered by Jesus and at first it may strike us as strange.

Does not the minister and the missionary take pains and use every means to publish abroad his work?

Do we not use the newspaper to advertise our church services and pulpit subjects? The churches are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to spread abroad their work and some ministers go beyond legitimate advertising into sensationalism to make themselves known.

But Jesus "charged them much that they should not make him known." Why was this? We can see some reasons for it.

Crowds and excitement may hinder as well as help some kinds of work; and this is specially true of spiritual work which may have its true nature and object smothered in mere sensational emotionalism.

The Holy Spirit speaks not in thunder and fire as efficiently as in a still small voice, and conscience hears such accents most clearly in the silence. Every pastor knows that a high-pressure revival, however much we work for it and welcome it, is yet attended with this danger and sometimes defeats itself and leaves after consequences that are unfavorable to steady church work and permanent results.

Jesus also had enemies that were watching him and growing increasingly suspicious and hostile, and it was wise not to stir them up unduly. Anyway, Jesus was no sensationalist and was never after crowds for the sake of his own popularity. He was a quiet worker and was not thinking of his own reputation but only of the success of his spiritual mission.

His way is still the best for us, and the way some ministers push themselves into publicity and advertise their results in terms of members and money is far from the method and spirit of him who "charged them much that they should not make him known."

5. In the Land of Gennesaret

A considerable time elapsed between the first part of this lesson and the second passage. Gennesaret, the beautiful name of a region south of Capernaum, was visited by Jesus and his disciples, and his fame had spread there so that "the people knew him," and again they came in throngs to receive his healing ministry.

And again the fountain of his virtue was opened and flowed out upon them in streams of mercy and health.

These results should mark the coming of Christ into every community and city, region and country. Disease should be banished, public health should be promoted and human life should be lengthened.

And this is the result as vital statistics abundantly show.

Disease runs riot in non-Christian lands, medicine is largely superstition, infant mortality is terrible and all life is shortened. The Christian missionary takes with him his modern science and skill, sanitation and knowledge of the laws of health, and this soon begins to tell on the physical and physiological condition and health of the people.

But these results of Christianity must flow out upon the world through our hands and hearts, and wherever we are in faithful service there Christ is also.

By our works is he manifested and the world knows him.

The healing of his seamless robe is ever by the world's beds of pain, and this is the secret of his fame and why the people will more and more go after him.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Does it often require bravery to be prudent and non-aggressive?
2. What progress is the gospel making in drawing the multitude of the whole world?
3. Is the popularity of Jesus increasing or declining to-day?
4. How can we distinguish between true and vicious publicity?
5. Why do people follow Jesus to-day?

LESSON VI—FEBRUARY 5

Jesus Misunderstood and Opposed

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Facing Unavoidable Opposition.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Misunderstood Jesus.

Golden Text: He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name. John 1:11–12.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 50:4–9.

Lesson Passage: Mark 3:19–35; 6:1–6.

Lesson Text Mark 3:19–27; 6:1–6

19 And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. And he cometh into a house.

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

21 And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

22 And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub and, By the price of the demons casteth he out the demons.

23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

26 And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27 But no one can enter into the house of the strong *man*, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong *man;* and then he will spoil his house.

1 And he went out from thence; and he cometh into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things? and, What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and *what mean* such mighty works wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended in him.

4 And Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Sanity of Jesus Doubted by His Family.

2. The Charge of the Scribes.

3. The Answer of Jesus.
4. Whence Hath This Man These Things?
5. Is Not This the Carpenter?

Jesus is still at the height of his popularity, but his enemies are also multiplying and becoming bolder and more malignant, and a mournful cloud rises on the horizon in the doubt of his own mother and relatives as to his sanity.

1. The Sanity of Jesus Doubted by His Family

It was bad enough that among the Twelve there was "Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him," but now the ominous circle of doubt widens so as to take in those that are near and dear to Jesus and thus touches him at the tenderest point.

His mother and brethren appear on the outer edge of the multitude and pass word in to Jesus that they want to see him.

They had come to lay hold on him, believing that he was beside himself.

The excitement attending his ministry, the rumors that were flying about, the whispered charge of his having an evil spirit, and the growing opposition of influential enemies seem to have been too much for the faith of his family, and at last led them to attempt some action. They doubted his very sanity and thought to get him away as a crazy man that needed the guardianship of his friends and the quiet of his home. And so they went to call him off from his work in the sacred name of motherhood.

Those that tread lofty and lonely paths of duty and heroism, pioneering ways of discovery and reform and righteousness, must expect to be misunderstood and opposed, and possibly counted mad even by their dearest friends.

Paul was declared to be beside himself, Columbus was ridiculed as a crazy man, early advocates of foreign missions and of the abolition of slavery met the same fate, and reformers to this day are usually called fanatics and cranks.

It puts a painful strain upon the ties of companionship and kinship for us to get very far ahead of our friends.

Progress is often costly and cruel in the cords it snaps asunder behind us. Christ's gospel separated him, at least for a time, from his own mother and brothers, and he came to thrust a sword in many a household. Often still, even in Christian countries, and more cruelly in heathen lands, it puts a man at variance with his friends, separating him from their lives and sympathies.

But we must be true to duty and to Christ, though we must stand alone and be counted insane, and he that loveth father or mother or son or daughter more than him is not worthy of him.

2. The Charge of the Scribes

The scribes that here appear upon the scene came down from Jerusalem. The great ecclesiastics up in the capital were scenting danger down in Galilee.

They saw that the new teachings of the young Nazarene were making headway among the people and that it was time to call a halt.

It looks as though a delegation had been sent down to investigate and take decisive action. These scribes saw the casting out of a devil and they did not deny the miracle. But something had to be done to counteract its influence, and they gave it out that Jesus was possessed of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and that it was by his evil power that he wrought his works.

Other devices of theirs had failed, and now they would try traducing him.

They would sow the air with lies about him and turn all his good to evil. Suspicion should dog his steps and every act of his should become proof of his complicity with the prince of darkness. Presently people would recoil at his touch and fly at his approach and thus his work would be effectually ended. It is a question which is the worse: their bold plot to kill Jesus (John 5:18), or their defamation of his character.

It is hard for us to tell the truth about one we do not like and easy for us to border all his acts with an edge of guilt and cloud all his motives with evil.

3. The Answer of Jesus

Jesus did not often stop to answer the calumnies that were uttered against him.

Innocence does not need to answer every evil tongue, and it is useless to try to run every false word down.

But there is a time to speak as well as a time to be silent, and this was such a time with Jesus.

The charge of the scribes was so deadly that, if there were the least grain of truth in it, it would destroy his influence, and therefore it must be refuted. When Jesus does stop to answer his enemies we may expect to see lightning flash forth from him, for his replies are wonderful exhibitions of wisdom so direct and ready, sometimes sharpened with sarcasm or winged with wit, and always so convincing and conclusive.

This charge drew from him one of his most elaborate and crushing replies.

How can Satan cast out Satan? The charge implies that Satan is casting out his own subjects and tearing down his own kingdom.

Satan is no fool to be guilty of such folly. He may be wicked but he is not witless. A divided kingdom cannot stand.

Jesus next hints that the true explanation of his casting out devils was that he had bound the strong man, or the prince of devils, in his own house and had then cast his minions out. This reasoning was conclusive and did not leave the scribes a logical leg to stand on.

If the enemies of Christ maintain unity of action against him, how much more should his friends be united for him? The divisions of his followers are a sad feature of his kingdom and one of its greatest weaknesses.

4. Whence Hath This Man These Things?

Another gap occurs in the story and again we find Jesus in his home town. On the Sabbath, as his custom was, he went to church and took part in the service. The people at first wondered at the gracious words he spoke and then began to say, "Whence hath this man these things? and, What is the wisdom that is given unto this man?" The

same wonder and objection was also raised against him up in the university city of Jerusalem when the Jews asked, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

What college has he been to that he should teach us?

A high place must be given to the learning of the schools. If we were to disparage colleges and universities, the very stones would cry out against us.

But a danger attends such learning. Its tendency is to become conventionalized, professionalized, fossilized.

It may become filled with pride and grow exclusive and intolerant toward all who cannot show an official diploma. Presently it may be found rejecting and obstructing new light, and, if not marveling, then sneering at a new teacher, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

Men of original gift have a fountain of light within and such men are little dependent on schools and care not for professional diplomas. Where does the poet go for his poetry? To spelling books and grammars and dictionaries? No, these would not make a poet in fifty years. He goes to nature and life, to trees and grass and sky and to the human life that beats around him, and he simply puts down what his poetic soul sees and feels.

So Jesus went for his knowledge of religion not to books about religion, but to religion itself as experienced in his own soul. For his knowledge of God he did not go to books of theology about God, but to God himself and in fellowship with the Father he learned the secret of his character and will and ways. "My teaching is not mine," he said, "but his that sent me."

His knowledge of faith was not derived from a psychological analysis of faith, or from what others said about it, but from the faith he exercised in his own heart.

This deep inner fountain of experience was the secret of his marvelous teaching, though he had never been officially taught.

Important as are books and creeds, their tendency is to turn us into artificial fountains so that only that which has been poured into us will come out of us. Infinitely more important it is that we have a well of water springing up in our own minds and hearts.

We can have direct knowledge of God through faith and obedience, just as Jesus had. "If any man willeth to do his will," he said "he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God."

Then our religious life will not be forced through us, insipid and stale out of books and creeds, but it will gush out of us as streams of living water.

5. Is Not This the Carpenter?

Yes, that is just who it was. The question was asked by his townsmen in derision and scorn, as though it would place a stigma upon Jesus that would forever discredit him as a prophet, but the designation has ever since been worn by him as a mark of honor.

It is a startling fact, which even after nineteen hundred years has not lost its wonder, that the Saviour of the world was a carpenter.

This is not what the Jews expected, and it is not what we would have expected. They looked and longed for a Messiah who would come as a royal conqueror, wearing purple robes and marshaling great armies to break the iron rule of Rome and raise them to political power and splendor, and probably we look for a great scholar and statesman with wisdom and eloquence to move the world. But God's ways are not as our ways, and his Son came neither as the one nor as the other, but as a carpenter.

This question is the only gleam of light we have from the life of Jesus from the twelfth to the thirtieth year of his age.

Of this long period, comprising more than half his life, not a word is recorded to tell us what he was doing except this word "carpenter." But as an artist with a single sweep of his brush will sometimes draw an outline of his picture, so this word paints in outline the life of Jesus during this period. It sketches the life of one who did not separate himself from his fellowmen, but knit himself into the humblest human relations. It shows us a common toiler, working at a useful trade and living contentedly in honest poverty.

There is color enough in this word to paint a complete picture of the outer life of Jesus.

It is worth more than all the apocryphal gospels that are full of absurd stories of his youth.

What is the relation of the church to-day to Jesus the carpenter?

The painful fact must be admitted that there is a chasm which appears to be widening between the church and the working classes, especially in the cities. The causes for this separation are complex and lie partly on both sides. But we ought to be most concerned with the causes that lie, not on the side of the workingmen, but on the side of the church.

The main cause on the part of the church is the caste spirit of wealth and fashion and pride that is creeping into it.

Workingmen instinctively feel this and are publicly saying it. And so, while the churches may be running after and welcoming people of means and social standing who come with spotless linen and gloved hands, the workingmen are passing them by in crowds.

Such a spirit is disloyal to the very cross of Christ; and if we make a church in which Jesus the Carpenter is not just as welcome as Jesus the glorified, he will repudiate us with wrathful indignation, as he did the church of the Pharisees, and publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of God before us.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Name some men of genius whose sanity was called in question.
2. What charges are brought against Jesus to-day?
3. What is the best answer to make to charges against Christianity?
4. What is the best kind of education?
5. What can we do to bring the working classes into the church?

LESSON VII—FEBRUARY 12

Jesus Pictures the Kingdom of God

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How the Kingdom Grows.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Growing Kingdom of God.

Golden Text: Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Matt. 6:10.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 145:7–13.

Lesson Passage: Mark 1:14–15; 4:1–34.

Lesson Text: Mark 4:26–34

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth;

27 And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how.

28 The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

30 And he said, How shall we liken the kingdom of God, or in what parable shall we set it forth?

31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth,

32 Yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it;

34 And without a parable spake he not unto them; but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Seed in the Ground.

2. The Process of Growth.

3. Mustard Seed.

4. Growth of the Kingdom of God.

5. Teaching by Parables.

On the shore of Lake Galilee, standing on its sandy beach and sitting on its grassy banks, were the gathered multitude, while from the pulpit of a fishing boat Jesus delivered to them a series of parables. It was the first instance of his using this mode of teaching and seems to have surprised the disciples so that they asked him privately for an explanation. Parables are pictures and each parable presents a special aspect of the kingdom of God.

1. Seed in the Ground

The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed upon the earth.

This brings the kingdom down upon the ground in more senses than one.

It relates it to the natural processes of the world. It is not a foreign and alien intruder in this world, but it is at home among us and is as natural as farming. Jesus constantly illustrated his religious teaching from the common things of life and thus made his kingdom as real and reasonable and vital as our everyday experience.

The kingdom begins as seed sown in the ground.

This seed is the truth of the gospel and the ground is the human soul in which this teaching is cast. Seed is a striking symbol of truth, for, like seed, truth has a mysterious principle of life by which it lays hold of the mind and the mind lays hold of it and it begins to sprout. Any truth taken into the mind throws out filaments of mental association and absorbs into itself all the truth in the mind and thus grows into fruit.

The sowing of the seed is the human part in the process, just as is the sowing of seed in our fields. The minister and teacher are doing this, and so are all Christian workers.

When the seed is sown the sower must wait until it grows up, "he knoweth not how." The farmer knows much about corn, but one thing he does not know,—how it grows. The scientist knows much more than the farmer about corn, but he is equally ignorant of how it grows. We can plant the corn and then we must leave it with the sun and shower and let them do their work.

So we can teach truth, but we cannot follow it into the depths of the mind and heart and understand how it grows. Only the Holy Spirit of God knows this secret, and we cannot control or force this process.

This is the chief point in this parable that "The earth beareth fruit of herself." Some things we can do in spreading the kingdom by sowing the truth, and other things we must leave with God.

2. The Process of Growth

There are, however, germinating energies in the soil that stir a seed into activity. The sun shoots its mystic influences into it and the soil gives it a congenial environment and presently it begins to swell and sends down a slender root and pushes up a tiny green blade and the wondrous process of growth is under way. The process is one of slow and orderly development: first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear.

This is God's way of doing things and it in no way excludes him from the process.

The same process rules in the kingdom of God. Things do not come all at once or in any order, but first things come first and last things come last.

Conviction precedes conversion, and fact before faith.

In our religious teaching and work we must not expect quick results or fruits out of their due order and time. Often must we wait and see only blades and not grow impatient because the full corn does not immediately ripen.

Yet fruit is the proper end of growth, without which the whole process is so much loss.

And the end of Christian teaching and believing is a harvest of better minds and purer hearts and richer life. We are to work for these vital results and see that we get them. A farmer that every year plowed and sowed his fields and never gathered a crop would be disgraced as well as bankrupted.

We can be as sure of results in the field of the kingdom as we can on the farm, and we should have the wisdom and patience to secure a harvest.

3. Mustard Seed

The grain of mustard seed presents the same subject from a different point of view. The master Teacher knew how to throw light upon a subject from different angles so as to make it grow luminous with clarity and interest; he multiplied illustrations, and yet he did not simply repeat himself and tire his hearers.

The contrast between the smallness of the beginning and the greatness of the result is the point of this parable.

A grain of mustard seed, is one of the smallest of seeds, yet it is not despised and cast away on this account but is sown in the ground with as much care and faith as the larger seeds. The earth does not disown it, nor the showers refuse to fall on it, nor does the sun hide its face from it, but the whole solar system begins to nurse it with as particular care as it does an oak or a giant Redwood.

And all this care is abundantly justified, for presently the tiny seed begins to sprout and show what it can do. It spreads its roots down under the soil and reaches its stalk up towards the sun and finally grows into trunk and branches to which the birds flock and turn it into a choir gallery of song.

Small beginnings are never to be despised in any field.

An atom is so small that no human eye, using the most powerful microscope, has ever seen one, and yet the whole material universe is built up of such infinitesimal particles. Snowflakes are tiny fragile things, lighter than the smallest feather, and yet pile them up on a mountain and they form tremendous snowfields that come roaring down in destructive avalanches or condense into glaciers from which pour rivers. A Redwood, growing through forty centuries and towering up three hundred feet, grew out of a seed so small that it will lie in the hollow of the hand, and all the oaks in the world came from one acorn.

Great doors swing on small hinges, and momentous events in history turn on trivial points.

A cobweb, it is said, saved the life of Mohammed and changed the history of the world, and several apparently insignificant happenings caused Napoleon's star to pitch madly from its sphere at Waterloo.

Almost every one can see how small events have turned his career this way or that, and things he once despised have become dominant in his life. A page in a book, an item in a newspaper, or a chance word from a stranger may change one's whole ambition and effort. Mustard seeds are small, but they may split rocks and sow their germs far and cover a continent with their yellow blossoms and pungent seeds.

4. Growth of the Kingdom of God

The kingdom of Christ started with small beginnings which men despised and ridiculed and thought to crush under their feet. They crucified the King and scattered his disciples and thus believed they had ended the whole matter.

But there was divine life in this precious Corn of Wheat which could not be stamped out.

Though it seemed to be buried forever in the stony soil of the Roman Empire, yet it began to grow and sprout in secret and then it pushed up through the hard crust into an unfriendly air. But all the adverse forces of bloody persecution of the empire could not stop or hinder its growth, and in due time a Christian Cæsar sat on the throne.

The triumph of Christianity during these early centuries is one of the wonders of history, exciting the perplexed astonishment of such an infidel historian as Gibbon himself.

And the same growth has spread the kingdom of God down through the centuries and out over the world. To-day its branches cover every continent around the globe.

It has become a world tree in which many institutions find lodgment.

Not only religious organizations, such as Christian churches and schools and hospitals, flock to it, but the creative forces of our modern world, such as democracy and liberty, universal brotherhood and world peace, lodge in it.

We never know how great a thing we may be doing when we sow a seed of Christian truth and service.

Our humble word or deed may lead to the conversion of a child who will play a great part in the kingdom or the world, and even giving a cup of cold water in the Master's name shall in no wise lose its reward.

The point common to these two parables is that growth goes on in secret from small beginnings to great results, and there is thus a part in its process that is beyond human control.

"The earth beareth fruit of herself." We can put the seed in the ground at the beginning and can reap the harvest at the end, but there is a secret process between these extremes in which we have no part.

There is an affinity between seed and soil and shower and sun that will work without us and bring forth the proper fruit. So there is an affinity between the seeds of truth and the human soul which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, will cause the seed to grow and produce the proper effect. As the farmer must be patient, when he has done his part, to let the seed and the soil and the solar system do their work, so must we be patient when we have done our part in sowing seeds of truth and leave a part with the soul itself and with the Spirit of God working deep within the heart.

It is possible in our eagerness and earnestness to try to force our wills into this secret process and override the slow growth of truth and the responsibility of the receptive soul, and thus we may actually do harm.

5. Teaching by Parables

"With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it." Why did he adopt this mode of teaching?

First, to make the truth interesting and real, vivid and vital to his hearers.

A parable is a short story with a moral point; it is a picture of the truth.

An abstract statement of truth is difficult to visualize and grasp and is apt to be dry and uninteresting. It fails to find the mind, to catch on to some point of connection in the contents of the mind and thus awakens no response, does not take root and begin to grow, or does not strike fire and kindle the mind into a glow of light and heat.

Put the same truth in the form of a story or illustration drawn from the familiar things of life, and instantly it takes on form and color, paints a picture in the mind that awakes attention and arouses the whole soul.

Jesus spoke in the language of daily life and made religion as concrete and practical as farming and fishing. His sermons were picturesque and compelling in their appeal, his hearers knew what he was talking about, and the common people heard him gladly.

This is one secret and perhaps the chief power of the teacher and preacher to-day.

The abstract preacher fails to grip his hearers, but the concrete preacher speaking in illustrations sends a moving picture through the minds of his hearers and they look and listen with rapt attention.

Another reason why Jesus spoke in parables was that the truth might be veiled so that it would not violently offend the prejudices of his hearers. Enmity was now in the air and it was a time for prudence and caution. Jesus at times slipped the truth into the minds of these resentful Jews in forms in which they did not recognize it and yet it lay in their hearts as seeds that might in time grow and bear fruit.

This principle also at times should enter into our teaching.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What various kinds of truth are represented by different seeds?
2. What different kinds of soil in the soul receive the seeds of truth?
3. What light does modern scientific agriculture throw upon farming?
4. Is there similar modern knowledge that helps us in spiritual sowing?
5. How can we learn to speak in parables?

LESSON VIII—FEBRUARY 19

Two Miracles of Power

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Universal Power of Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus' Power over Nature and Human Life.

Golden Text: Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? Mark 4:41.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 104:1–8.

Lesson Passage: Mark 4:35–5:20.

Lesson Text: Mark 4:35–41; 5:15–19

35 And on that day, when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side.

36 And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him.

37 And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling.

38 And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awake him, and say unto him, Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?

39 And he awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

15 And they come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with demons sitting, clothed and in his right mind, *even* him that had the legion: and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw it declared unto them how it befel him that was possessed with demons, and concerning the swine.

17 And they began to beseech him to depart from their borders.

18 And as he was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with demons besought him that he might be with him.

19 And he suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and *how* he had mercy on thee.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Jesus Asleep in a Storm.***
2. ***Panic-stricken Disciples.***
3. ***A Smooth Sea.***
4. ***A Demon-possessed Man.***
5. ***Devils Driven Out.***
6. ***A Soul Saved but Swine Lost.***

It was at the close of a busy day that this incident occurred. Using a boat for his pulpit Jesus preached to a vast audience that crowded the shore and spread out over the sea in other boats around him.

As evening drew on and he needed rest he saw that the only way he could escape the multitude and find retirement was to cross the sea to the other side.

He directed his disciples to do this, and soon the boat was out on the lake and was then caught in one of the sudden storms that sweep down upon it and lash it into fury.

1. Jesus Asleep in a Storm

Where was Jesus in this storm? "In the stern, asleep on the cushion." How could he sleep while his disciples were in such danger and were not only wide awake but wild awake?

He slept, first, because he was tired. Weary with his day's labor in which he imparted his soul to the multitude, spent in body and mind, he lay down in the arms of "nature's sweet restorer."

That is the first secret of sleep: be busy by day so that you will be healthily weary and can sleep by night. Next, Jesus had not done anything that day that troubled his conscience by night; and this is the second secret of sleep.

Do not do anything by day that will keep you awake by night.

Again, Jesus prayed to the Father and committed himself to his care so that he could sleep in the storm without fear; and that is another secret of sleep.

Cast all your care upon God in faith and prayer, and then lie down in trust. So "God giveth his beloved sleep."

The Master slept while his disciples were in danger and distress: does it often seem to be so still? How often when the storms of life are beating around us does God seem to be asleep and there appears to be no one near to hear our cry?

But we cannot always tell what God is doing from human appearances.

For a small moment he may forsake us, but with great mercies he will gather us. All his waves and billows may be sweeping over us, yet God has not forgotten us, and "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

2. Panic-stricken Disciples

What did these disciples do? No doubt they at first did their best to manage the boat. They were fishermen that knew that lake and were expert in the arts of seamanship, many a storm had they weathered, and they knew how to reef the sails and scud before the wind.

But this storm was too much for them. The waves were beating into the boat and filling it with water, and they thought that they must have instant help, or all would be lost.

At this point of peril they awoke Jesus and said unto him, "Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?" "Save, Lord; we perish," is the form in which Matthew records their prayer.

The disciples appealed to Jesus as Master or Lord: not as to another boatman or fellowman, but as Lord who is mighty to save.

They knew that his power underlay and overtopped that storm and could curb its wrath and bring it low; and their faith in him, though at times it wavered and was near to unbelief, now rose in its strength and cast itself upon him.

It has become proverbial that in a storm at sea even infidels and scoffers turn believers and start to pray. Few things so overwhelm men with a sense of their dependence and helplessness and cause them so fully to believe in and fling themselves upon a higher power as a storm-tossed surging sea.

There are moments in life when God is the Great Necessity, and the soul instinctively flies to him.

We should trust in the Lord at all times, but especially in the hour of darkness and storm. The mysterious universe in its infinite sweep and power ever confronts our pitiful impotence and should awe and humble us into dependence and faith.

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his going shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

3. A Smooth Sea

The prayer was immediately answered. The sleeping Christ awoke and arose and stood upon the deck of that sinking ship, and with calm dignity and self-possession, as of one who knew that he held that sea in the hollow of his hand, he said, "Peace, be still!" The tempest-driven waters recognized a higher power than all the fury of the wind, and instantly the storm ceased and the waves fell flat and the holy calm of evening lay upon the smooth sea.

Can we believe such a miracle? Why not?

All three synoptic evangelists record it as though it were something they could not forget or omit, and it has on it the inimitable marks of truth. And what is it more than the mastery of mind over matter? The human spirit can quiet down and control the human body even when it is in a paroxysm of pain, and cannot the divine Spirit that pervades the world master it at every point and mold it to his purpose?

One of the deepest facts of the universe is that matter is the servant of mind and may be only a mode of its expression, and this miracle is an instance of this fact.

The material universe is only a small fraction or manifestation of a vastly larger spiritual world in which the material lies ensphered and by which it is controlled.

The Lord Christ can control other storms than those that rage at sea: the storms of temptation and trial, of disappointment and loss, of suffering and sorrow—these also at his bidding will grow still in our stormy breasts, and a holy calm will fall upon our souls.

4. A Demon-possessed Man

As Jesus with his disciples stepped upon the shore "into the country of the Gerasenes," he was seen by a man in the distance who immediately started towards him. This man was possessed of an unclean spirit, or with a whole brood or nest of such demons.

He was a violent madman or lunatic. He made his home in a graveyard and wandered about in the hills. No fetters could bind him. Often they had caught him and put handcuffs on him and chained him, but he would break these as though they were spider threads and, laughing at his captors with frenzied glee, would be off like the wild wind. In his paroxysms he would cut himself with sharp stones and often would the

stillness of the midnight be pierced by his bloodcurdling shrieks and screams. He was the terror of the neighborhood. Everybody feared him and was ready to help beat and chain him, but nobody loved him.

This man, when he saw Jesus afar off, ran and worshiped him.

We do not know how much he knew about Jesus, how much trust he had in him, or what help he hoped to get from him. He seems, however, to have had some trust in him and drew towards him.

Of course rumors of Jesus and his power to heal had spread around the lake and must have reached this sequestered Gentile region on the south shore. At any rate this poor fellow realized his own pitiful condition and started towards Jesus.

This is the first state of mind and step towards salvation.

We must have some conception of our true condition in sin and need of cleansing before we can seek forgiveness and purity and peace. And just as this possessed man could not expel that devil from his heart, so the sinner cannot of his own will expel sin from his soul.

The leopard cannot change its spots and no man can change his own nature.

5. Devils Driven Out

Jesus said, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." This was the reception Jesus gave the man. He spoke with mercy to the man, freeing him from his terrible bondage; and he spoke with judgment to the unclean spirit so that it quailed and was terrified.

He did not judge the man but only the devil within the man.

Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but only to condemn all unrighteousness that the world through him might have life and liberty. God is not our enemy, waiting to catch us in a trap that he may take vengeance upon us, but he is our Father who loves us and has sent his Son to say to us each one, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit."

This is the great need and blessing of life: not that we get rich or attain our worldly ambitions, but that we have hearts out of which Jesus has cast every evil spirit making us free and pure.

Then came the strange request of the unclean spirit, whose name was Legion, for devils love company and go in broods and droves as all evil

thoughts go together, that they might be permitted to take possession of a herd of swine feeding upon the hillside. This permission was given, and when the unclean spirits had entered the swine the herd became violently mad and two thousand pigs rushed down a steep hill into the sea and were drowned.

There are in our human world evil spirits that turn men mad and would drown pigs.

6. A Soul Saved but Swine Lost

The keepers fled into the city and country and told what had happened, and out came the people, including the owners of the swine, to see. What did they see?

They saw him that had been possessed with a legion of devils sitting clothed and in his right mind.

Can we imagine the relief and liberty and blessedness which must have filled his soul? He had been tormented and driven out among the tombs, a raving maniac cutting himself with stones. Now he sat in the full possession of his mind, a free man! It must have been something like coming out of a wild and frightful dream into a clear and peaceful state of mind.

One would have thought that the sight would have filled the Gerasenes with joy and that they would have welcomed Jesus to their country. But no! when they saw it " they began to beseech him to depart out of their borders."

Him who had saved the bedeviled man and freed them all from a scourge and could have blessed them all, they prayed to get out and leave them alone!

What brought about such a strange attitude and action? It was when they heard " concerning the swine " that they thus turned upon Jesus.

A man had been saved, but two thousand swine had been lost!

They counted up the net result of the affair and found that the books did not balance. They were out of pocket by the transaction. They did not want a saviour who saved men at the expense of pigs.

Let the devils have the men, but save the hogs!

This logic is still being used among us. How often have we had calculations to show how great is the economic loss of prohibition? Men will take pencil and paper and pile up statistics as to property and men thrown out of employment and figure it out that we are the losers by this policy.

They do not put into their calculations the immense moral, not to say economic, benefits that result from it. No matter about better men, look at the financial loss.

Let the devil of strong drink have the boys, but save the pigs! This is verily the devil's logic and they are not wise that are deceived thereby.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Was Jesus really weary and sleeping, or did he only seem to be so in order to teach his disciples to trust in him?
2. What notable sea storms and shipwrecks occur in the Bible?
3. To what degree has modern science controlled the sea?
4. In what ways are human sins and vices like demons?
5. Is any form of wrong ever profitable to society?

LESSON IX—FEBRUARY 26

Other Mighty Works of Jesus

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus the Giver and Preserver of Life.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Works of Faith.

Golden Text: Thy faith hath made thee whole. Mark 5:34.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 3:14–24.

Lesson Passage: Mark 5:22–43.

Lesson Text: Mark 5:22–27, 32–36, 41–42

22 And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he falleth at his feet,

23 And beseecheth him much, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death: *I pray thee,* that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live.

24 And he went with him; and a multitude followed him, and they throng him.

25 And a woman, who had an issue of blood twelve years,

26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

27 Having heard the things concerning Jesus, came in the crowd behind, and touched his garment.

32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

35 While he yet spake, they come from the ruler of the synagogue's *house,* saying, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Teacher any further?

36 But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken, saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe.

41 And taking the child by the hand, he saith unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.

42 And straightway the damsel rose up, and walked; for she was twelve years old. And they were amazed straightway with a great amazement.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Trouble in the Home.

2. An Appeal to Jesus.

3. Disquieting Delay.

4. Calm Assurance.

5. Life from the Dead.

The account of this miracle is interrupted and cut in two by having the account of another miracle thrust into the midst of it. Jesus was

on his way to the home of Jairus when a woman afflicted with an incurable disease stole through the crowd and touched the hem of his garment.

He instantly discerned in her trembling touch the hand of faith; and though he was on the most urgent business, yet he stopped to single out the suppliant and heal her malady.

Thus Jesus heard every cry and met every need of humanity. His ministration to one sufferer did not draw him off from another.

Death in the rich ruler's house did not interfere with the poor woman's healing.

While hastening to one work of mercy he dropped others on the way. His good deeds overlapped and were interwoven. The fulness of his grace overflowed the main channel and supplied all needs. Christ still hears every prayer, and the whole world cannot crowd the humblest soul from his throne. The Lord is plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon him.

1. Trouble in the Home

The first fact we encounter in this narrative is trouble in the home. Doubtless the home of Jairus had been a happy one. A ruler of the synagogue, he occupied a position of rank and influence among the Jews; he was probably wealthy as compared with his neighbors; and his home was sunny and songful with the presence of a little daughter, the only daughter in the home and the darling of his heart.

But into this bright and happy home trouble has entered and it is darkened.

Trouble is a visitor in every home. No matter how securely it may be founded upon wealth and social position and how full it may be of comfort and happiness, sooner or later trouble will steal in and mix bitterness with its sweets.

The little daughter of Jairus, the fair blossom and joy of this home, lay a-dying. The merry music of her song and laughter was hushed, and a painful stillness filled the house, disturbed only by the moaning and tossing of the wasted sufferer and by low whisperings and broken sobs.

Death often chooses a shining mark.

The dearly beloved child, the flower of the family, the sunshine and music of the home, may be pierced by the ruthless shaft and lie quivering in mortal agonies. Buds and blossoms as well as ripened fruits drop from the mysterious tree of life. How strong is the tie of blood and love that bind the parent to the child, and how unspeakable is the pain of separation. Our children strike their roots deep into our hearts, and when they are torn away our whole being is rent and convulsed.

Such was the great storm of sorrow that was beating upon this home.

2. An Appeal to Jesus

What effect did this trouble have upon Jairus? It caused him to go to Jesus for help. Doubtless he had tried other physicians first, and when they could not save, he came to the great Physician and fell at his feet, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death: I pray thee, that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live."

This was a brave step on the part of this Jewish ruler.

All his interests centered in the synagogue which Jesus was undermining. Jarius had looked upon Jesus with suspicion and prejudice. He would have scorned the idea of going to the Galilean for help. Would not this bring upon him the condemnation and contempt of the Jews?

But when trouble came into his home and he saw his darling daughter in the agonies of death, his prejudice and enmity gave way to faith, he cast his fears away and sought the great Healer. When all was well with him, he would have been ashamed to have been seen going to Jesus; but when death entered his home he cared not for his doubts or fears or for the sceptical sneering crowd in the street.

Faith and hope mastered his heart, and he boldly went for Jesus. This is often the effect and mission of trouble among men.

They are separated from Christ and God by barriers of self-interest or prejudice or fear. Their business, or their habits, or their companions stand between them and God. They would be ashamed of being suspected of being religious, and they would laugh at the idea of praying, or of being prayed for.

But when trouble comes, when they are laid on a bed of sickness or a son or daughter lies at the point of death, these barriers are broken through and swept away. They are not ashamed of religion then. The minister is sent for, and all hearts unite in prayer to God.

Irreligion may grow rank in the sunshine of prosperity, but faith may deepen its roots and toughen its fibers in the storms of adversity. Trouble should drive us to God that we may cast our burden upon him and find peace.

3. Disquieting Delay

How did Jesus respond to the appeal of Jairus? He was touched with a feeling of that Father's infirmity, he was moved by the sorrow of his heart and the sincerity of his prayer, and he instantly became his servant and started with him to his home.

It was the mission of Jesus to go with such sorrowing ones, and this is his mission still.

What a sense of relief must have eased the burdened heart of Jairus as the great Physician started with him to his home? He felt that all would now come out well.

But on the way Jesus was interrupted by the appeal of the poor woman for healing. The trembling touch of her hand thrust in through the throng was sufficient to stop him even in such an emergency.

We can imagine how surprised and annoyed Jairus was at this delay.

He was anxious that Jesus should hasten on, for it was a case of life and death and in a few moments it would be too late. As Jesus continued to talk with the woman, Jairus grew restless and impatient. It seemed to him that Jesus had forgotten or was neglecting the dying child. The precious moments were slipping by, and his little daughter would soon be dead. And while Jesus was yet speaking with the woman, his worst fear was realized, for messengers came from his home, saying, "Thy daughter is dead:" and then added as if in bitter derision of his faith, "why troublest thou the Teacher any further?" As much as to say, It is a foolish thing to wait any longer for the Galilean rabbi: he cannot help you now and perhaps never could have done so.

What a terrible moment was this to that father? Doubtless it seemed to him that now all was lost.

Do we not at times have some such experience?

We go to God in trial and wrestle with him for a blessing. We experience a sense of relief for a moment, but a delay occurs and the blessing seems to be stopped on the way. The storm gathers and breaks, and still no help comes. Then doubts may assail and deride our faith. The psalmist had this experience as have many of the saints of God: "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" (Ps. 23:3).

Perhaps we may be tempted to abandon faith in God and pray no more. Terrible thoughts may plague our souls and defy our faith. Did not Job's wife bid him "curse God and die"? (Job 2:9).

Christ sometimes seems to withdraw his help in the very extremity of our need, and this experience may put a heavy strain upon our faith.

4. Calm Assurance

How did Jesus receive this message of the death of the child?

He was not surprised or alarmed in the slightest degree.

He neither abandoned his visit nor hastened his steps. There was never any real delay or hurry in Christ's work. All things were in the power of his hand, and he disposed them at will. He had not forgotten and was not neglecting the dying child while he was healing the poor woman, but was attending to both cases in accordance with his wisdom and love.

But though Jesus was himself at ease, yet he knew the anxiety of the father, and when he overheard the message that the daughter was dead he turned to Jairus and said, "Fear not, only believe." He knew that the message would be a terrible blow to the father's faith, and he supported him by these sublime words.

What manner of Physician is this that is not disturbed even when his patient is dead?

And the air of calmness and certainty displayed by Jesus must have assured the wavering faith of Jairus and given him peace.

Jesus speaks the same words of assurance to us in our trials. Though it may seem to us that God is delaying to help us and has even forgotten us, yet this appearance is due to the narrowness and shortness of our vision. We are in the darkness and storm and cannot see all his purposes. God's ways are often strange and dark to us, but we should not let our heart be troubled, neither should it be afraid. Let us view the might and mercy of God and be at peace.

We are in his care and all things are working together for our good. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.

5. Life from the Dead

Jesus now proceeded to the home of Jairus. Already hired mourners were weeping and wailing with a great lamentation. Jesus looked on the noisy confusion with pity, and said, "Why make ye a tumult and weep? the child is not dead, but sleepeth."

Death in his sight was only a sleep.

He saw the other side of death where the spirit awakes refreshed into new and glorious life.

This announcement of Jesus drew from the mourners a burst of derisive laughter. How sceptical and scornful are many in the presence of death: its cold silence seems to mock our faith.

But Jesus was as serene and sure in dealing with death as with life: they were to him but two sides of the same fact.

Having cleared the room of all but the father and mother, he took the child by the hand and said, "Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise." Instantly the spirit returned, the body began to pulse with life, and the child rose up and walked. No wonder that all present "were amazed with a great amazement": they had seen the king of terrors discrowned and conquered by the Galilean Rabbi.

What a crushing answer was this to the scornful scepticism that laughed at Jesus when he announced that the child only slept.

He will make equally good all his promises as to immortality and eternal life.

What was supernatural and so amazing to others was perfectly natural to Jesus: it was simply the easy working and outflashing of his divine power.

And what joy and rejoicing must have filled that home? The darling child was released from death and restored to the full strength and bloom of life. Once more her sunny presence and merry laughter were the sunshine and music of the home. How the hearts of father and mother must have leaped with joy, and with what faith and gladness did they worship Jesus?

Christ always brings healing and health and happiness into the home and makes it a foretaste of the eternal home in heaven.

Having restored her to life, Jesus did not forget the bodily needs of the young daughter and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What different kinds of trouble invade the home?
2. Can we do anything to prevent such trouble?
3. In sending for the physician are we also sending for the great Physician?
4. Does this miracle put any special strain upon our faith in the supernatural power of Christ?
5. Why does not God raise any dead to life to-day?

LESSON X—MARCH 4

Jesus and the Twelve

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus' Call to Service.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Training of the Twelve.

Golden Text: Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Mark 16:15.

Lesson Passage: Mark 1:16–20; 2:13–14; 3:13–19; 6:7–13, 30.

Lesson Text: Mark 3:13–15; 6:7–13

13 And he goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would; and they went unto him.
14 And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,
15 And to have authority to cast out demons:

7 And he calleth unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and he gave them authority over the unclean spirits;
8 And he charged them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no bread, no wallet no money in their purse;
9 But *to go* shod with sandals: and, *said he,* put not on two coats.
10 And he said unto them, Whereso-ever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart thence.
11 And whatsoever place shall not receive you, and they hear you not, as ye go forth thence, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony unto them.
12 And they went out, and preached that *men* should repent.
13 And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *The Twelve.*
2. *Object of Their Selection.*
3. *Sent Forth with Power.*
4. *Their Entertainment.*
5. *When They Were to Depart.*

The work of Jesus was not growing and spreading and it was necessary that he should have trained help. Any work cannot proceed far without organization, and Jesus had now reached this point.

The work of founding the kingdom of God could not be allowed to drift about, but had to be committed to competent men and conducted along definite lines.

Jesus was not only a teacher, but he was also an organizer and builder, and the same practical judgment and skill that he acquired as a carpenter in joining timbers and building houses came into full play and served him well in the larger work of laying the foundations of the temple of God in the world.

1. The Twelve

This scene fittingly took place on a mountain and may be taken as the founding of the Christian ministry. "He calleth unto him whom he himself would."

There is a divine call to this service and men should not rush into it unbidden.

This call usually comes along the lines of fitness and opportunity and conviction of duty.

It is true that the Christian ministry is not the only work to which men are divinely called, for any true work is God's work to which he calls men. Jehovah "called by name Bezalel" to be "filled with the Spirit of God, in all wisdom, and in understanding, and in all manner of workmanship" (Ex. 31:1-5). So men are called to be carpenters and miners and to carry on all the complex work of our human world.

Yet it is still true that there is a special divine element in the work of the ministry in bringing the gospel of Christ directly to men.

Twelve men were selected, and their names are given and we scrutinize the list with interest. Peter always comes first and Judas last. There are two and possibly three pairs of brothers among them.

This is probably the most important list of names in the world.

These men were given a work to do compared with which winning battles and founding empires are of small consequence.

They were to let loose a force that was to shape all future ages.

Yet they were not great men, and there was not a man of genius among them. They were plain men unlearned in philosophy. Not one of them belonged to the priestly or professional class. None was of noble birth, but all were obscure and mostly men of small means. At least four of them were fishermen and some of them had the fisher-

man's habit of and expertness in profanity. One of them was a despised tax collector, and one was a zealot, a kind of Bolshevist of the day. One always has attached to his name the dark stigma, "which also betrayed him." Proud Jerusalem, metropolis of the country and seat of the hierarchy, was not permitted to put one name in this immortal list. Verily not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty, were called, but God chose the foolish to confound the wise, and the weak to confound the mighty.

Yet these men so poorly gifted and unlearned and weak in themselves could do mighty things and reshape the world through Christ who strengthened them.

The very simplicity of these men, unspoiled by human philosophy and Pharisaic theology, made them unobstructed channels through which the grace of Christ could flow in resistless might.

The Spirit of Jesus touched and transformed their souls with eternal issues and made them great.

Often has God in choosing men for divine visions and victories passed by the noble and the rich and learned and found humble souls as his messengers and breathed into them his Spirit and told them first the message he sent them to tell to the world. The charcoal needs only a rearrangement of its atoms to become a diamond. The marble block waits only the sculptor's chisel to release an angel. The human soul needs only the transforming touch of Christ to become forever pure and beautiful.

The humblest men have in them divine possibilities.

If we will only heed Christ's call and enter his discipleship, he will endue us with power from on high, and greater works than he did shall we do.

2. Object of Their Selection

The object of the selection of the Twelve is definitely stated. First, "that they might be with him." They were to be with Jesus during the remaining years of his ministry that they might be instructed in his doctrines and trained in his methods and filled with his spirit. They were to be put through a theological training for the ministry. They were to be with him that they might become like him.

It was only as they had Jesus in them that they could preach Jesus to the world.

The disciples of any master of learning or art must come under the spell of his personality and absorb his spirit if they would do his work. This is the first and highest preparation for the ministry and for all Christian service. If we have not first been with Jesus we are not fit to be with any one else as teacher and friend.

They were appointed further "that he might send them forth to preach." Their special privilege in being with Jesus was not for their personal blessing and enjoyment only, but it had an ulterior end in the blessing of others.

They were taught that they might teach; they received that they might give.

The gospel, having been received, must not be shut up within our hearts but be imparted to others and proclaimed to the world. Everything that Jesus has given to us we are to give to others. Freely we have received, freely we should give.

Herein is the unselfishness and expansiveness of the gospel.

It is only by giving it that we can keep it. The more of it we give to others, the more of it we have ourselves. Subtracting from it adds to it, and dividing multiplies it.

Preaching the gospel is the mission of every Christian and the best sermons are living sermons.

3. Sent Forth with Power

Having called them to himself and imparted to them some of his spirit Jesus now "began to send them forth by two and two."

They were called to him that they might go from him.

Their discipleship was not to be the continued enjoyment of his companionship, but it was only preparation for going out from him into service. We do not come into the Christian life and into the church that we may enjoy its genial society and comfort, listen to fine sermons and feel good, but we come into the church that we may go out of it into the lost sinning and suffering world and impart to it the new life and strength and courage that we have received.

They went forth two by two, for lonely work is ever hard work, and Christians still work best when they join in common service in which they support and cheer one another. This plan is always followed on our mission fields.

These pairs of disciples did not go forth empty-handed, but Jesus "gave them authority over unclean spirits." More definitely they had power over unclean spirits, "to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 10:1). They were to have in them some of the omnipotence of Christ and do the same things he did.

The gospel in their hands was not to me a mere theory or dead doctrine, but a practical power.

Their mission was to be a march of mercy whose monuments would be healed men and saved souls. It is still our commission as ministers and teachers to go everywhere preaching the kingdom and touching the world with healing hands.

Part of this work has now been committed to physicians who are specially trained and skilled in it, and the hospital is simply an annex or extension of the church.

The gospel must not be kept in the pulpit, but it must be got down into daily life where it will heal the sick, cleanse lepers and cast out devils.

This work is now going in our modern world on a wider scale than ever before, and the gospel is proving itself the power of God unto salvation.

4. Their Entertainment

These disciples were to take no purse with them, nor any extra baggage, but were simply to depend on ordinary hospitality. In the East travelers are received into any house and entertained for several days without thought of charge, and this would be ample support for these disciples on a temporary mission.

But it does not follow that support that would suffice for them in their circumstances would be sufficient or even decent for our ministers and missionaries in our circumstances.

These directions were local rules and not universal principles. Jesus on another occasion laid down the general principle that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7).

The gospel is free in its forgiveness and life, but the preaching of it must be done by men who are worthily supported while they are doing it.

Water as it falls in rain and flows in streams is free, but it costs something to have it pumped through pipes into our homes.

Having entered into a house, they were to abide there and not be too particular about their entertainment and change their boarding place too frequently and hastily.

They were not to be hard to please, but to put up with such things as were given them.

Some guests, even some ministers, have sly ways of finding fault with their entertainment. They expect more than they have a right to receive, or they are offensive in their manners. Some are so fastidious and finical in their tastes and imperious in their demands that their presence becomes a burden and vexation, and the welcome of their coming is surpassed by the joy of their going.

It is a fine art to know how to receive entertainment graciously, as well as to know how to give it, and this grace the Christian should cultivate.

5. When They Were to Depart

If these disciples were in any place to meet with refusal to hear them, they were to "go forth thence," and "shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony unto them." They were to depart from that city and wipe off the very dust of its streets clinging to their feet as a testimony against it.

This was not to be done in any spirit of anger and revenge, but as a solemn and sorrowful protest against its unbelief.

Ministers and missionaries are to do all they can and go to the last limit of patience and sympathy and love in endeavoring to win the attention and confidence and conversion of unbelievers. But there may come a point of refusal and persecution when further efforts would be useless and harmful, and then the Christian may withdraw.

We may do harm in pressing our Christian faith too persistently on others.

Their sovereign right to decide their own faith and action must be respected. We may grieve over their unbelief, but we must leave them alone.

Sinners may become so hardened and violent in their sins that God himself withdraws his Holy Spirit from them, and they are left in their sin.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Was there any special significance in the number Twelve in choosing the disciples?
2. What events occurred between the two passages of our lesson?
3. Has Christianity retained or in any degree lost the power given unto these first disciples?
4. Are we giving proper support to the ministry to-day?
5. What place did repentance hold in the message of these disciples and should it hold in our teaching to-day?

LESSON XI—MARCH 11

Jesus Feeds the Multitudes

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Meeting Everyday Needs.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus' Compassion for Human Need.

Golden Text: I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. John 6:35.

Devotional Reading: Ezekiel 34:11–46.

Lesson Passage: Mark 6:31–44; 8:1–10.

Lesson Text: Mark 6:31–44

31 And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32 And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart.

33 And *the people* saw them going, and many knew *them,* and they ran together there on foot from all the cities, and outwent them.

34 And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent;

36 Send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat.

37 But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread, and give them to eat?

38 And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go *and* see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39 And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

41 And he took the five loaves and the two fishes,and looking up to heaven he blessed, and brake the loaves; and he gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42 And they all ate, and were filled.

43 And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes.

44 And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Problem That Perplexed the Disciples.

2. The Master's Solution of It.

3. Systematized Work.

4. Distributed Bread.
5. Abundance for All.
6. Fragments Gathered up.

After the execution of John the Baptist Jesus with his disciples crossed lake Galilee to the northeastern shore for safety and rest. No sooner had he started than the people followed after him in boats and around the shore so that presently a great multitude were gathered before him. That was the end of his rest and the work of teaching and healing began.

1. A Problem That Perplexed the Disciples

Evening drew on and a difficulty loomed up.

What was to be done with all these people?

Jesus intimated that they must be fed. The perplexed disciples took stock of their provisions and put their heads together and were at their wit's end. Already the sun was dropping behind the western hills and the chill of evening was in the air. Something must be done quickly: what could it be? They thought of the multitudes; they thought of their few loaves and fishes; they thought of everything except Christ. It does not seem to have occurred to them that he could help them out of their difficulty.

Sometimes in our perplexities we think of everyone—except God.

At last they hit upon a way out of the trouble and came to Jesus with the plan. "Send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat."

Send them away! How natural the suggestion, how easy the solution, what a quick riddance of the burden!

But we must not be too hard on these disciples, as we would probably have thought of the same thing and their plan seems to be only common sense.

But nothing can make bigger blunders than common sense when it forgets God.

This thought may get into our theology and church life. A church that makes itself exclusive and welcomes only people of a certain class and gives the cold shoulder to others, a silk-robed, kid-gloved Christianity that separates itself from the common crowd, is saying in tones that are not misunderstood, Send them away. The anti-missionary spirit that says, We have heathen enough at home, is saying to the heathen abroad, Send them away and let them buy bread for themselves.

When in any way we make sure of our own basket of bread and are not willing to share with others, but look with indifference on the great lost world, we are bidding the multitudes to take themselves off and look out for themselves.

"Send them away," said the disciples. "They need not depart" (Matthew), instantly said Jesus.

Any plan that would send people away from Christ is no part of his gospel.

Here is the contrast between the disciple and Master: the one short of means, narrow and selfish and wanting to send people away; and the other full of resources, broad and sympathetic and having abundance and welcome for all.

2. The Master's Solution of It

"Send them away," said the disciples; "Give ye them to eat," said Jesus. So he rolled the great work back on the disciples. They virtually came to him for help in a work, and he said to them, Do it yourselves.

Poor help this seems, and yet it is just the kind God is always giving us.

He never takes a work entirely off our hands and does it for us, but immediately gives us a part in it.

When asked how many loaves they had, the disciples answered, "Five, and two fishes," adding, "but what are they among so many?" (John).

Evidently they did not think much of these pitifully few loaves and fishes and thought they were hardly worth mentioning.

This is what Moses thought of his power of speech when God commanded him to go and speak unto Pharaoh. He suggested Aaron as

the eloquent member of the family, yet Aaron never said anything that anybody can quote and Moses spoke great words that are still thundering through the world.

This is what we often think of our abilities when we are given a work to do. We have only a few little loaves and cannot feed anybody; we are slow of speech and cannot speak or pray; we are lacking in money, or in education, or opportunities. We cannot do anything, for we have no means. If we were gifted and blessed as others, we might do something, but as it is, we have no chance! Send this case away to somebody else.

This is our blind reasoning and miserable excuse in the presence of hungry people waiting to be fed.

What did Jesus say to these disciples? "Bring them hither to me" (Matthew). The Master was not alarmed at the smallness of the means. What the disciples despised, he took and with them wrought astonishing results. With the five loaves and two fishes they thought hardly worth mentioning he fed five thousand men besides women and children.

It is not the means, but the power behind the means that does the work.

What we need is not more means, but more willingness to use and multiply the loaves we have. There are undreamed of possibilities in us, if we would only develop them.

3. Systematized Work

How was this done in the miracle? First, Jesus had the multitude sit down on the green grass in ranks of hundreds and fifties.

What was the need or use of this? that the people might be got at, that the work might be systematized.

The disciples did not go around and distribute the bread indiscriminately, but each one had his own rank or company and served that only. The principle is that of order and organization. We must cut up our work and apportion it out so that each one will have a definite part.

Find your work and stick to it; pick out your man and save him.

Our churches cannot be carried on successfully without organization any more than can a bank or a great steel mill. A pastor or teacher must now be a good organizer if he would succeed in his work.

Jesus, Son of God though he was, yet did not discard common sense and good business principles, but observed them in his work, and we must have the same executive ability in our work.

If we would receive some of this bread we must sit down in one of these companies. If there were any stragglers that hung around the edges of that crowd and refused to sit down in one of these companies, it is not likely that they received any bread.

Our churches are such companies, and if any one refuses to sit down in these ranks in the organized companies of believers, there is no promise of the bread of life for him.

4. Distributed Bread

Next, Jesus took the bread and blessed it. It was no longer common bread now; no eye could detect any change in it and yet it was changed. Jesus had pledged to that bread all his mercy and love; he had put behind it his omnipotence. When we get the divine blessing upon our work, the very constellations are marching behind us.

Ask God to bless your daily bread; it will then be better bread and in some way it will go farther.

Jesus, having blessed and broken the loaves, did not keep the bread but gave it to the disciples. Jesus did not keep anything for himself, but gave all his heavenly glory and earthly comfort for the lost multitude of this world.

And the disciples did not keep the bread, but passed it on to the multitude. We are to receive of the bread, but it would be utter selfishness to keep the bread of the gospel to ourselves. It is given to us so abundantly that we may give it to others. Partake of this bread freely, but do not forget to pass it on. See that the hungry man next to you gets some of it. By word and gift and service distribute this blessing that there may be less hunger and more satisfied souls in your world.

Note the exact point in the narrative at which the miracle comes in.

Where is it that the loaves begin to multiply? "And he took the loaves": it is not there; there are still only five loaves and two fishes in his hands. "And looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the

loaves": we might expect it there; but it is not there; after he blessed them there are still only five. "And he gave to the disciples to set before them": there it is!

When they began to divide and give the loaves then the loaves began to multiply: not before.

Perhaps the disciples as they began to give the bread feared that it might soon give out and hesitated to go on. But it did not fail; they kept on giving and yet their hands never grew empty.

When shall we learn this blessed secret that it is more blessed to give than to receive and that as we give the best things of life they multiply in our hands.

5. Abundance for All

"And they all ate, and were filled." When the multitude saw the few loaves and fishes started out, perhaps those in the distant edges of the crowd thought that the baskets would never reach them. But nearer and nearer came the bread until it reached the outermost rank and the last man and the last child was satisfied.

Let us not fear that the mercy of God will ever run short.

Though we seem to be far out on the edge of the multitude, the bread will come to us in undiminished fullness. It is near us now and all we have to do is to take it and eat.

This we must do for ourselves. Jesus can make the bread of life and send it to us, but he cannot eat it for us.

This we must do through our faith and obedience.

Our hearts are hungry: we feel our need of something more satisfying and lasting than this world affords. We need bread: not husks that swine do eat; not bread of the field only or mainly, but bread for the soul; the bread of forgiveness and purity and peace.

To whom shall we go for this bread? Only to the Lord Jesus; he only has words of eternal life.

This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.

6. Fragments Gathered up

"And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes."

Was not this strange frugality on the part of him who could create such abundance?

But unbounded resources and the largest liberality may be closely connected with the strictest economy. The Hand that could create many loaves did not disdain to pick up crumbs of bread. God in his infinitude of resources never wastes anything or lets fragments fall useless out of his hand.

Wealth is no excuse for waste.

Many a great fortune has grown out of gathering up fragments. The sewerage of Paris has been turned into a golden stream yielding two millions of dollars a year. The by-products of some manufacturing establishments are their chief profit.

Wasting fragments has ruined many a business.

We are dreaming that we could accomplish great things if we had the time and means, while we may be letting slip through our fingers moments and means that might be turned to great use. Fragments of time have made great scholars, or eminent speakers.

Waste no bread, neglect no fragments, but gather them up and keep them for the hour of need and service.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What motives attracted the people to follow Jesus across the lake?
2. What are some perplexing problems we have in the service of Christ?
3. Illustrate the power of systematized work.
4. In what respects is Jesus the Bread of Life?
5. What fragments may we gather up?

LESSON XII—MARCH 18

Jesus Teaches Sincerity

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Sincerity in Religion.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus Denounces Formalism.

Golden Text: Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Proverbs 4:23.

Lesson Passage: Mark 7:1–23.

Lesson Text: Mark 7:1–13

1 And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem,

2 And had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled that is, unwashen, hands.

3 (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders;

4 And *when they come* from the marketplace, except they bathe themselves, they eat not; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brasen vessels.)

5 And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands?

6 And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, But their heart is far from me.

7 But in vain do they worship me, Teaching *as their* doctrines the precepts of men.

8 Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men.

9 And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition.

10 For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death:

11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given *to God;*

12 Ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother;

13 Making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Pharisaic Theology.

2. Its Practical Effects.

3. Jesus Answers the Pharisees.

4. The Place of Tradition in Religion.

Jesus appears in this scene as a lawbreaker. He came into frequent collision with the Pharisees on points of their law. They had spun

around life a complicated harness of rules and regulations that had become a terrible burden and bondage.

Jesus boldly smashed through these traditional restrictions and made room for liberty and life.

Yet while destroying these human additions to the law, he did not destroy religious and ethical law but conserved its sacredness and perpetuated its obligation.

1. Pharisaic Theology

"Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with defiled hands?" The question thus put to Jesus by the Pharisees and scribes does not seem to raise any vital point or portend any grave consequences; rather it seems trivial and innocent; yet it is the spark of fire that kindled into white heat the whole issue between him and them.

It is the gleam of the dagger with which they meant to pierce his heart.

The washing referred to was not the ordinary washing for cleansing soiled hands, but a ceremonial rite to remove religious defilement from contact with Gentiles or unclean persons or with ceremonially unclean objects in the marketplace. They were only one instance of the immense mass of minute refinements and requirements with which the Pharisees had overlaid the teachings and rites of Moses.

However at first these may have been intended to guard the law, they gradually hid and smothered the law and took its place as something infinitely more important.

These traditions thus acquired an authority far exceeding that of the Scripture itself. "It is a greater offense," said the Mischna, the Hebrew book containing these traditions, "to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis, than to contradict Scripture itself." "The Bible was like water, the Traditions like wine, the Commentaries on them like spiced wine."

These restrictions were woven around faith and conduct until they regulated and bound life at every point and in its most trivial details.

In the ceremonial washing of the hands, the hands had to be washed by an elaborate process involving many precise ways of holding them and pouring water on them and letting it drain and drip off them, which had to be carefully and rigidly observed. There were twenty-six rules for this rite in the morning alone, and to violate or neglect any one of them was declared to be a sin as bad as adultery or murder and worthy of death! To such absurd lengths had the Pharisees carried their theology, and other religious men have followed in their way and exalted their own teachings and ceremonies into authority that usurped the authority of God himself.

The history of theology shows that theologians have been prone to substitute their traditions for divine teachings and identify themselves with God.

2. Its Practical Effect

It is easy to see what would become of the spirit of religion when caught in such a system: it would be constricted to death, the husk would strangle the corn.

The outer material form gradually buried and smothered the inner spiritual reality.

More and more importance and care were attached to mechanical forms and acts and less and less to spiritual states and deeds.

Not only so, but the mechanical form came to be used as a deliberate means to kill off spiritual life and as a mask to hide all manner of wickedness. While the Pharisees were so punctilious and ostentatious in observing their own traditional inventions and were ready to persecute even unto death any one who dared to neglect them, they were robbing widows, refusing to support their parents and revelling in all manner of iniquity. They were like sepulchres, outwardly white and spotlessly splendid, but inwardly full of dead men's bones and offensive corruption.

This has ever been the tendency of ceremonial religion.

History has repeated itself at this point again and again. While Christianity started as a simple spiritual system with only two rites of the plainest and most common nature, yet it soon revived the process of elaborating the outward form and gradually grew into the most

gorgeous spectacular system the world has ever seen. The temple at Jerusalem which Jesus swept away is outshone by St. Peter's in Rome that surpasses it many fold in material glory.

And still is it true that as the outer form grows in complexity and richness the inner spirit is likely to wane and wither in purity and power.

Ritualistic religion can hardly escape the tendency to put the symbol in place of the substance, to insist upon and trust in the outer form while the inner life grows proud, unspiritual and sensual.

3. Jesus Answers the Pharisees

What did Jesus say in answer to this apparently innocent question as to the practice of his disciples? It seemed to be only a trivial matter of personal habit, but he discerned its true import and far-reaching consequences.

It raised the whole question of the relation of his spiritual teaching and kingdom to the unspiritual and tyrannical teaching of the Pharisees.

It was a critical moment with him: he stood facing a temptation as perilous as that which assailed him in the wilderness. He must either yield to these Pharisees and thereby surrender his own authority and mission or stand up squarely against them and meet all the consequences.

His kingdom was at stake.

But no indecision sicklied his thought, no fear infected his conscience and courage with hesitation and weakness, but he faced the Pharisees as boldly and magnificently as he faced the devil himself.

He quoted against them their own Scripture and prophet in an apt and telling passage from Isaiah in which that great prophet had charged the people of his day with the very same sin of which the Pharisees were guilty. These forebears of theirs had also honored God with their lips while their heart was far from him and in vain did they worship Jehovah, "teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." And then the charge was pressed home upon them, "Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men."

The sin of the Pharisees thus had ancient lineage and support, and this illustrates how it comes about that men substitute their own traditions for divine teachings. They do it gradually, adding line upon line of their own devising to the oracles of God, mixing their own imagination and interests and desires with the divine will until they come to believe in their own inventions and insist upon imposing them on others as of divine authority and making it out that to doubt them is to doubt God. Ironically Jesus told them, "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition."

Next in his answer to the Pharisees Jesus quoted Moses himself, their great authority whom they professed to follow. He quoted the commandment as to honoring father and mother, and then exposed the ingenious and cunning way which they had devised for evading it.

When a son owed a gift to his parents for their support, he perverted the very law to enable him to escape this primary responsibility. "If a man shall say to his father or mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do." Corban, meaning gift, was applied to anything vowed to God, and when a son, owing support to his parents, said of the portion due to them, "Corban," this signified that that portion had already been dedicated to God and therefore could not be given to them. This act of dedication, however, did not bind the son actually to give the portion to God, but only put a prohibition on it that it should not be devoted to other uses.

Thus one divine obligation was used as a device to put out of commission another divine and more fundamental command.

These Pharisees cunningly played one part of their religion against another so as to do the things they wanted to do and yet escape deeper obligations they did not want to fulfill.

There are still many experts in this line.

Many are the ways in which this thing may be done. The Pharisees had their ways, and we may be not less fertile and cunning inventing such expedients. They evaded the commandments of God and were

ingenious in devising means of seeming to keep them and yet of keeping their consciences quiet. Hardly ever do we trample upon a commandment without having some such excuse or compromise by which we quiet conscience and yet make "void the word of God."

Turning from these Pharisees to the multitude Jesus cried out, "Hear me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man."

Thus Jesus boldly broke with the Pharisees and trampled upon their traditions. He would have none of their petty rules and regulations as a necessary condition of living a religious life.

The answer he gave that day was a turning point in his ministry. It shattered the whole Pharisaic system and thereby made him a terrible heretic. So deeply were they wounded, so open was their resentment, that the alarmed disciples said to Jesus, "Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?"

Full well did he know this, but he calmly answered, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up."

He was teaching, not simply for that time, but for all time and foresaw the final victory.

4. The Place of Tradition in Religion

Tradition has its place in religion, as in all things else.

It stores up the accumulated experience of the past and hands it down to us as a precious inheritance.

The race would never get forward if every generation had to begin again at the beginning.

The Bible itself is so much tradition; it is the religious experience of the chosen people as recorded and interpreted for us by prophets and apostles. As such it is of immense value to us, saving us from fighting our way up out of heathenism and planting our feet on the summits of Christian truth and attainment won by illuminated and holy men.

Jesus himself used tradition.

He did not cast away all that had been done by Moses and Isaiah and begin anew, but he adopted and adapted their materials; he introduced his religion, not by revolution, but by evolution.

Nevertheless, tradition has its dangers.

It is to be used as so much valuable material for further building, but not as a fixed and finished structure. It furnishes us with seeds and roots, but these are not to be kept from sprouting, but are to be made to grow into flower and fruit. When tradition is used as a bond to bind our brains and constrict our hearts, when it becomes an artificial system of human invention and not a vital breath of the Spirit, then we are to break through and trample upon it that we may win our liberty and right to grow.

Tradition must always be tested by truth and right.

It is only one of many means to an end and never the end itself; and that end is the kingdom of God within us, an inner well of experience springing up into fresh life.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Who were the Pharisees?
2. Did they fulfill a good purpose in Jewish religion?
3. What harm did they do?
4. What is tradition?
5. In what ways may we make void the Word of God?

LESSON XIII—MARCH 25

REVIEW

Jesus Proclaims the Kingdom of God

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Jesus Began His Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Early Ministry of Jesus.

Golden Text: And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. Matt. 9:35.

Devotional Reading: Malachi 3:1-6.

Mark, the Gospel of action, has given us a series of rapid pictures showing Jesus at work and combining into a composite photograph of his wonderful personality and life.

1. John the Baptist and Jesus

All great men have forerunners who prepare the way for their coming and work, and Jesus had John the Baptist who fulfilled the prophecy of a messenger to prepare his way.

John himself was prepared for his work out in the wilderness where in solitude he could meditate and receive messages of the Holy Spirit.

He was an eccentric preacher whose strange appearance attracted attention. It was not his eccentricity, however, in which his power lay, but his burning sincerity and startling message. His initial word was "repent," or "change your mind," as the word means, and this is ever the beginning of the gospel and of a new life.

Jesus appeared among John's hearers and asked that he might be baptized. Baptism was a sign of entrance into the kingdom, and Jesus ever "goeth before" and accepted the symbol of this duty. This act of humble obedience was followed with a heavenly blessing when the Holy Spirit descended upon him and the Father's voice declared him to be his beloved Son.

We never know what heavenly blessing will fall upon us when we fulfill all righteousness.

2. Jesus and the Sick

In the first scene we have in the ministry of Jesus in Mark's Gospel we find him in church where he took part in the service. He honored the synagogue as his Father's house, and there all the questions of our life receive divine illumination.

Jesus spoke with such power that the people exclaimed, "What is this? a new teaching!"

The scribes had bored them beyond endurance with their dry dronings, but the gospel came to them as a fresh breeze and shower of rain.

He not only taught in the synagogue, but he also healed an afflicted man. His gospel was not simply a finespun theory, but had practical power to cast out evil spirits.

Worship must ever make war on wickedness or it is an impertinence among men.

Out of the church Jesus went into the home and carried on the same work of healing, and then in the evening his gracious ministry overflowed out into the street and healed the multitudes that had been brought to his door.

Such was the healing ministry of Jesus, and his seamless robe is still by our beds of pain.

3. Jesus and Sinners

Next we see Jesus healing a paralytic carried into his presence on a bed by four friends, who showed us that we should let nothing stand in our way in bringing sinners to the Saviour. Then we find Jesus at a fashionable dinner party where "publicans" and "sinners" were gathered. Jesus met this class of unpopular people on the ground of simple human friendship, not that he might descend to their level but that he might lift them up to his own.

This was a great offense to the Pharisees and scribes, who separated themselves from and abhorred contact with such people, and they found grave fault with Jesus for meeting with them.

But he met their criticism with a reply that cut it up by the roots.

The physician comes to deal with the sick and the whole need not his services. Jesus took the Pharisees on their own ground and rooted his

action down in common sense. They were inconsistent and absurd as would be a physician who would refuse to meet a patient, and he was in the world as in a great hospital to treat anybody and everybody.

We need to be careful that we do not have this exclusive and selfish spirit.

4. Jesus and the Law

Jesus frequently appears in these scenes as a lawbreaker. He came into constant collision with the ritualistic system of the Pharisees and scribes.

One of these points was the matter of fasting. This has been a useful means of promoting the spiritual life in its competition with the sensual life of the body, and we still need this discipline. But the Pharisees had pushed it to an unreasonable extent and made it a burden.

A good thing may thus become a bad thing, its very light turning into darkness.

Jesus disregarded this system of excessive fasting, and when called to account for his method of life he answered by two striking illustrations. He showed that the new life of the gospel could not be sewed as a patch on the old garment of Judaism, and could not be poured as new wine into old Jewish wine-skins, for its fermenting expanding life would crack and burst the old brittle containers.

The illustrations still apply to our modern knowledge in its relation to old forms of religious faith and life.

The new is ever modifying and clarifying and expanding the old, and the process is not to be feared and opposed but is to be welcomed as necessary and good.

We then find Jesus in a synagogue where he meets with the usual criticism of the scribes and where he heals a man with a withered hand.

5. The Growing Fame of Jesus

Next we see the growing fame of Jesus as it mounts towards the high-tide of his popularity.

His healing works were now attracting the multitudes and exciting the hatred of his enemies, and he prudently withdrew from the hostile city to the hospitable sea where the people continued to flock to his teaching and healing.

He preached to them and healed them, but he charged them not to make him known, for he did not court popularity and tried to avoid sensational crowds as this kind of reputation would interfere with his real work.

He presently passed into Gennesaret where still the people thronged to his presence and he continued his works of healing.

6. Jesus Misunderstood and Opposed

But the measure of his popularity and healing power was also the measure of the hostility of his enemies.

Misunderstanding now dogged his steps and sowed suspicion around him.

His very sanity was doubted, and this painful mistrust invaded his family and the very mind of his mother.

The scribes from Jerusalem here appear on the scene and bring against Jesus the grave charge that he was in collusion with the devil and was doing his works by this evil alliance.

Jesus quickly reduced this charge to absurdity.

Presently we find Jesus in his home town, where his preaching in the synagogue, at first received with praise, raised the sneering question, "Whence hath this man these things?"

Jesus did not have his wisdom and power from any human college, but out of his own heart in his fellowship with the Father. He was the Carpenter, a term which was then flung at him in reproach, but is now another immortal crown on his brow.

7. Jesus Pictures the Kingdom of God

Jesus frequently spoke in parables, which were short stories that threw the gospel as a moving picture on the screen of the imagination and made it vivid and vital.

The seed in the ground illustrated the naturalness of the gospel, following the same laws of growth and multiplied harvest as the seed in the field or orchard. There is an order in the planting and growth of the seed of truth in the mind and heart, proceeding from the seed to the blade and then to the ear and finally to the full corn in the ear, and we must observe this order in teaching and preaching the gospel.

But the end of the process is fruit, and if the gospel does not bear the fruits of the spirit in our lives, we are as great failures in the spiritual life as would be farmers in the agricultural life who would plough and sow year after year and never reap.

The parable of the mustard seed presents the same principle but brings out the smallness of the beginning with the greatness of the end in planting the kingdom of God in the heart and in the world.

8. Two Miracles of Power

Jesus wrought mighty works that showed his power over nature and human troubles and these are illustrated in Lessons VIII, IX and XI. The stilling of the storm at sea puts no undue strain on our faith when we believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

It was to be expected that such an extraordinary personality would exhibit extraordinary powers, even as men of genius can do works that other men cannot imitate.

Few things are more terrifying and reduce men to such a sense of helplessness as a storm at sea, and this little sea of Galilee was and still is subject to sudden violent tempests. Jesus with the disciples were in a boat when this storm struck them. He was asleep in his weariness, and the disciples awoke with a cry for help, and he spoke words that caused the waves to fall flat into a smooth sea.

So does he have power over the stormy sea of our human world to cause its waves of power and peril to grow still under the boat in which our faith floats.

Another mighty work of another order was his casting the brood of evil spirits out of the Gadarene.

Jesus does not now work miracles of this form, for the day of their need and usefulness has passed, but he does work results on a far wider scale that no less show his mighty power.

These miracles in Palestine were local and of limited usefulness, but Jesus is now present throughout the wide world, exercising his beneficent influence in enlightening men how to conquer and use nature and in healing demonized people and raising dead souls to life.

We do not have the outer form of these early miracles, but we do have their inner substance and spirit, which is a far greater blessing for us.

9. Other Mighty Works of Jesus

Another mighty work of Jesus brought joy into a darkened home. A ruler's house was overshadowed with a grave illness and a little daughter lay dying. This drove the Gentile father to the desperate step of going after the Nazarene Healer who consented to return with him. A strange delay marked the movements of the Healer as he stopped to minister to another sufferer on the way to the increased and terrible anxiety of the waiting father.

At length the home was reached, Jesus spoke words of calm assurance, and then he uttered the word that restored the child to life.

So can he bring assurance and joy into every home where there is faith: not always in the same way, but with equal love and power.

10. Jesus and the Twelve

Any social movement cannot proceed far without being organized. It must have order and rules and officers to administer them.

Jesus was subject to this law of our human world, and he was not only a teacher but was also an organizer and builder.

His work was now growing beyond his personal presence to guide it, and so he called twelve men to become his assistants to learn his methods and catch his spirit and carry on his work after he was gone.

These twelve were plain common men, mostly fishermen, and we might have thought that little could be expected of them, and yet they turned out to be among the greatest men in the world, measured by what they were able to do.

Their very simplicity, unspoiled by Jewish theology and Gentile philosophy, made them channels through which the gospel of Jesus could flow in unobstructed freeness and fullness.

11. Jesus Feeds the Multitude

The picture of the feeding of the multitude on the grassy shore of lake Galilee is beautiful and instructive in every feature and touch of

color. The disciples were perplexed as they were short of means in the presence of the problem the Master had laid upon them of providing for so great a number, but he himself solved it with the ease of omnipotence.

He first systematized the task and then used the means the disciples had and the bread passed from hand to hand until all were reached and fed.

Let us never fear that the Bread of Life will ever run short in feeding the multitudes of the world.

The fragments were gathered up and economy not less than abundance is a part of divine providence.

12. Jesus Teaches Sincerity

Pharisaic theology had gone to seed or had withered into husks without any bread for the religious hunger of the world.

The Pharisees came to Jesus with a question that seemed reasonable and yet it raised the whole question of the relation of their unspiritual religion to his religion of the spirit and drove a wedge of separation between them and him. He quoted their own Scripture against them and showed that it is the inward life that matters and not outward ceremony.

Tradition has its place in religion, but it must always be tested by truth and use.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some characteristics of Mark's Gospel?
2. Have you ever read it through at one sitting? Try it.
3. Give a sketch of the life of Jesus as set forth in this Quarter.
4. Give a list of the miracles contained in these lessons.
5. How can we use all these lessons as a means of promoting sincere spiritual religion?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND QUARTER

Mark's Life of Jesus

In the first six months of the year we have been studying Mark's life of Jesus. He was close to the facts as he was a young man in Jerusalem during the ministry of Jesus and his mother was a prominent member of the first Christian church. He was also associated with Peter and Paul and thus must have acquired and absorbed much concerning the life and spirit of the Lord.

The twenty-four lessons of the two quarters are a series of close-up views or high lights of the ministry of Jesus and give us a graphic picture of it.

The Gospel of Mark can be read at a sitting and it gives one a vivid impression of an intensely busy life moving rapidly from point to point and leaving mighty works along all its path.

In the second Quarter we have the last half-year of the ministry of Jesus when events of the greatest importance thickened up and grew dramatic and tragic.

We hear Jesus make to his disciples in a private interview the momentous revelation of his coming death and get Peter's reaction to this coming tragedy. We next witness the resurrection because this lesson falls at Easter. The Transfiguration then looms into view as one of the most splendid and significant scenes in the Bible. Jesus is next shown strengthening the ties of the home and illustrating his appreciation of childhood. Greatness through service is next brought out and illustrated. Palm Sunday comes next and this joyous day ends in judgment in the desecrated temple. Enemies are frequently coming upon the scene of these lessons and we see them helplessly floored when they try to catch Jesus. Parables were a favorite mode of teaching with Jesus, and the parable of the Vineyard comes in this series of lessons.

We are next introduced into that upper chamber in Jerusalem which is so precious to the Christian world as the place of the institution of the Lord's Supper and of his intimate tabletalk with the disciples on the last night before the end. Out from the scene of fellowship we go out into the Garden of Sorrow and on to the trial and the cross.

These are outstanding points that shine like stars along the line of these lessons and lure us on to study once more this Life of all lives for our instruction and imitation.

Let us try to study them so that we shall hide them in our hearts that they may reappear in our lives.

SECOND QUARTER

THE GOSPEL OF THE SON OF GOD

STUDIES IN MARK

(Second Half of a Six Months' Course)

LESSON I—APRIL 1

Jesus the Suffering Messiah

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Cost of Being Loyal to Christ.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus Interprets His Messiahship.

Golden Text: If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Mark 8:34.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 63:7–9.

Lesson Passage: Mark 8:27 9:1; 9:30–32; 10:32–34.

Lesson Text: Mark 8:27–37

27 And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi: and on the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am?

28 And they told him, saying, John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets.

29 And he asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

34 And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it.

36 For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?

37 For what should a man give in exchange for his life?

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *A Momentous Question.*
2. *A Great Answer.*
3. *The Shadow of the Cross.*
4. *Peter's Bad Blunder.*
5. *Self-denial.*
6. *Saving Life through Losing It.*

Jesus with his disciples at this time went north towards Cæsarea Philippi, apparently with the object of having a close private interview with them and making to them a momentous revelation.

1. A Momentous Question

When they were far off from the busy scene in which they had been moving, Jesus put to his disciples the question, "Who do men say that I am?"

This question is still throbbing at the heart of our civilization.

First asked by an obscure Galilean in that far-off solitude, it has come thundering down the ages and is the most momentous question in the world to-day.

Ideas rule life.

What men think determines what they do and are. The theories that are generally held with reference to industry, wealth, government, art, morals, and religion, mold human society into all its forms, as the hidden life of the tree shapes and colors every leaf and bud.

What men think of Christ is a pervasive powerful force in the world to-day and more than anything else affects its spiritual life.

The disciples gave the answers that men were giving. The answers were various, but they all agreed in viewing Jesus as an extraordinary character, at least a prophet, a mysterious personality containing an element of the supernatural.

Men are still giving various answers to this question, but they all take high ground with reference to his character and work.

The answer that Jesus was a myth, or a dupe, or an impostor, is not tolerated in any circle of opinion. Even the greatest sceptics see something in him that they cannot explain on ordinary principles and they pay tributes to him that fall little short of divinity.

The general mind of the world feels that Jesus Christ is a prophet in whose personality and power there is something supernatural.

Jesus now turned the general question into the personal inquiry, "But who say ye that I am?" This was the point he was aiming at and coming to, for their thoughts were to determine the thoughts of the world.

Important as is the general question, far more important to us each one is this individual question. No one can escape its sharp personal point. A neutral answer or attitude is impossible.

Whatever we think or do is a decision; and nothing else goes so deep down and so far out into our lives as who we say Jesus is.

2. A Great Answer

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (as the answer is given more fully by Matthew), exclaimed the impulsive fervent Peter. This thought did not then come into Peter's mind for the first time: it had been growing there a long while; the evidence for it had been accumulating; experience had been confirming it. But now for the first time it flashed upon him in the full depth and intensity of its meaning and leaped into clear, strong and masterful expression.

It is a great confession from every point of view.

It grasps Christ as the Messiah, the fulfillment and perfect blossom of the old Dispensation. The Jews were blinded by their pride at this point and refused to see in the humble Nazarene the Messiah of God, but Peter and the disciples in the midst of prevailing unbelief and prejudice had faith to see the truth.

The confession is great in that it exalts Christ as the Son of the living God, lifting him above humanity and crowning him with divinity.

This is the heart of our Christian faith.

It is the Godhead of Jesus that gives value and power to his mission and work. Deny him this crown, and he is reduced to the level of our

humanity and the world is left without a redeemer that is mighty to save.

Why did Jesus ask his disciples this question? Did he not know what they thought of him? Yes, but he wanted to draw out their faith into full confession and thereby to strengthen it.

Our beliefs grow more definite and deep and vivid when they are expressed.

A real conviction can hardly be kept shut up in the mind: it must leap into utterance.

Faith completes itself in confession, and if we really believe that Jesus is the Son of the living God we will confess this to him and before men.

3. The Shadow of the Cross

And now across the path of the disciples falls for the first time the fateful shadow of the cross. From that time began Jesus to part the veil of the future before them and show them things to come. "And he began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

He saw his path running straight up to Jerusalem into the murderous hatred of the priests and scribes.

Beyond their hatred he saw the terrible cross standing with its arms outstretched to clasp and crush him in an agony of death; and beyond the cross he saw the power and splendor of the resurrection morning.

This had been hidden from the disciples, but Jesus had been bearing the dreadful secret all along.

The Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world, and before man had sinned or ever the mountains had been brought forth, the Son of God gave himself to the work of redemption.

Jesus knew what was coming, the cross was no surprise to him. Patiently, unflinchingly he bore the burdens of human sin and calmly faced the cross as he saw it drawing near and nearer. This was the expression of his infinite love for the world and for us each one. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.

But the time had now come when the disciples had to be let into the secret, that they might grasp its meaning and that they might even help Jesus himself to bear it.

The path the Master trod the disciples must still follow, and the time is ever coming when he calls upon us to help him bear the burden of the world's sin and sorrow and to take up our cross and follow him.

4. Peter's Bad Blunder

The disciples were often a poor help to their Master and sometimes only made his burden heavier. Peter, having been the first to cheer the heart of Jesus with his noble confession, was now the first to sadden him with a bad blunder. He began to rebuke Jesus for thinking he would be killed and declared it should never happen.

The plan of redemption unfolded by Jesus, the roots of which ran back through all eternity, was not to Peter's liking and he proposed to stop it!

How true is this to Peter's shortsighted vision and impulsive nature.

But Jesus made short work with Peter's presumption.

He unmasked him as an agent of Satan and bade him from his presence; he showed him up as a stumblingblock in the way; and he exposed the root of his folly in a worldly mind. Never had such withering words from the lips of the Master fallen upon poor Peter: but he richly deserved the reproof.

This is what comes of our attempting to hinder God's ways and to improve upon his plan. We frequently slide down into worldly views and utter foolish speeches. We by our unbelief and selfishness and worldliness stand in the way of the very cross of Christ.

In so far as we do this, we are doing Satan's work and are stumblingblocks at the door of his kingdom. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and the quicker we drop ours and take his, the better it will be for us.

The way of the world is not the way of Christ. Minding the things of men is a poor policy and will not work on the high level of the spiritual world.

5. Self-denial

"And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Jesus is not the only one who is to bear a cross.

He goes before and opens a path, but all who would be like him must follow his steps. We are not compelled to enter this path and may follow some other road if we will; but if we would be Christians and wear the Christian's crown, we must carry the Christian's cross.

Self-denial is the first step in cross-bearing.

All desires, impulses, aims and ambitions that are antagonistic to the Christian life and spirit must be repressed and rooted out of our hearts. Such self-denial is often a hard battle that must be fought again and again.

But it is not an unnatural struggle that attempts to suppress our rightful instincts; it is only rooting out the evil that the good may grow.

These things are as weeds and poisonous plants in the field of the heart and life and removing them only gives the better impulses and ideals of the spirit a congenial soil and atmosphere in which to sprout and bloom.

Each one must take up his own cross.

A cross is any burden that we must bear in the Christian life, whether of temptation or trial, opposition or discouragement, or suffering and sorrow. Every one has his own cross, some besetting sin or personal infirmity or limitation or discouragement in his life that makes it hard for him to follow Christ.

But as Jesus bravely bore his cross unto the end and gained the victory, so are we to follow him until our cross is transmuted into a crown.

6. Saving Life through Losing It

But is not such self-denial and cross-bearing a harsh restriction upon and a great loss to our life? Jesus meets any such thought by casting

up the account of the transaction and showing the gain. "For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?"

This paradoxical saying is profoundly true.

Saving life by selfishly guarding it and pampering it, narrows its sympathies, blinds its better judgment, perverts its sense of relative values, blights its higher life of duty and aspiration, and hardens it into ignoble selfishness.

But losing life by freely and bravely throwing it out into the service and welfare of others broadens its sympathies and enriches all its higher sensibilities and powers.

The pages of history are starred with the names of those who have proved this principle and bear eloquent witness to its truth.

Socrates drank the fatal cup as a consequence of his convictions, Paul counted not his life dear in the same service, Luther could not do otherwise than stand true to the same principle, and are not these men to-day rulers in our human world wearing imperishable crowns?

When we put principle above worldly profit we are on the right road.

Though it cost us position and wealth and even bring ignominy, yet will it keep our conscience clean and strong and save our soul. Worldly gain is dust in the balance compared with this wealth of the spirit.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the value of asking questions?
2. What are some of the chief questions in which men are interested?
3. Why do material things bulk larger in our thoughts than spiritual values?
4. What are some ways in which we may be really interfering with Christ's work?
5. How much of the world can we gain and how much of the soul can we lose?

LESSON II—APRIL 8

The Resurrection

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Our Lving Leader.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Power of the Resurrection.

Golden Text: Because I live, ye shall live also. John 14:19.

Devotional Reading: I Cor. 15:20–26.

Lesson Passage: Mark 15:1–20.

Lesson Text: Mark 16:1–8, 19–20

1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was risen.

3 And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?

4 And looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back: for it was exceeding great.

5 And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe; and they were amazed.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who hath been crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold, the place where they laid him!

7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out, and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them: and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid.

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen.

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LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Central Column of Faith.

2. Spices for the Body.

3. The First Easter Message.

4. The Empty Tomb.

5. The Ascension.

The first Easter morning dawned on a day of tremendous excitement among the disciples in Jerusalem. They had been panic-stricken and dispersed, all their hopes were wrecked and all their dreams were dead,

but with the first rays of light on this morning the report spread among them that their Lord was risen.

This astonishing and incredible news upset and distracted all their judgments and turned the world into confusion around them so that they could hardly believe their own senses.

This fact is reflected in the language of the narratives which tries to express their state of mind by such words and phrases as "amazed," "affrighted," "terrified," "idle talk," and "great joy."

This excitement may be a factor in explaining the fragmentary and disconnected and more or less confused accounts of these days, which were not calmly composed as continuous and complete history, but were impressionistic memories of that wonderful morning, each Evangelist selecting those incidents which made the most vivid impression on his own mind, or which were best suited to his purpose.

1. A Central Column of Faith

The resurrection of Christ is the central column of the gospel on which all rests.

Throw this down and the whole structure falls into ruins. Make this sure, and the whole gospel is established.

For this event was not a mere material wonder, but a spiritual achievement of supreme significance. The miracles of Jesus were never spectacular prodigies performed to create a sensation and draw a crowd, but were healing ministries and spiritual manifestations of his extraordinary personality. They were an essential part of his work of redemption and were the proper outflow and overflow of his divine power.

The resurrection was not simply one miracle more, but was the unique expression of his divinity and the crown that completed the cross.

Paul in Romans 1:4 affirms that Jesus Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The word translated "declared" is the Greek word from which is derived our word "horizon," and Paul says that Jesus by his resurrection was "horizoned" as the Son of God with power.

The figure suggests that the resurrection encircles Christ as by a mountain horizon wall that hems him in with incontestable evidence of his divine Sonship.

In whatever direction we look from the empty tomb we see him horizoned with divinity. There is no gap in the evidence that breaks or weakens the continuity of the proof.

We are shut in to faith in his Sonship, and as long as this mountain rim surrounds him in an unbroken horizon, his divinity will stand demonstrated and secure.

2. Spices for the Body

The morning opens with the faithful women, who were last at the cross, first at the tomb. What were they doing there? They had bought spices and brought them to anoint the body of Jesus.

This loving act has immense value as showing the state of mind of these women and of all the disciples after the crucifixion.

They believed that Jesus was dead and had no thought or hope of his resurrection. They were utterly bewildered, crushed and scattered and supposed that all was over. They were in no condition of mind, then, to invent or imagine a resurrection, and any theory of fraud or of vision on the part of the disciples is a psychological impossibility.

This is incidental and undesigned but strong confirmation of the reality of this event. Visions and hallucinations depend upon a state of intense expectation and cannot spring out of a sceptical and hostile mind.

3. The First Easter Message

The angels that thronged the earth at the birth of Jesus again appear at his resurrection. There are some things that human lips must not be permitted to tell first: they were not the first to announce the birth of Jesus or his resurrection from the dead.

On their way to the sepulchre the women had wondered how the stone that closed it could be removed, but when they reached it they found the stone rolled away. An earthquake had shaken it loose and left the rocky jaws of the tomb standing open for the risen Jesus to step through.

When they entered the tomb they saw a young man sitting arrayed in a white robe, who greeted them with the assurance, "Be not amazed!" "Fear not" was the first note of the angel's song at the birth of Jesus, and this is the keynote of the gospel all the way through to the final shout in heaven.

Death terrorizes us, even an empty tomb frightens us, but the risen Jesus, standing on the other side of the grave, assures us that there is no harm in it and bids our troubled hearts be still.

And because this message comes from the Son of God, glorified by his resurrection, it is enough to quiet our fears and give us peace.

4. The Empty Tomb

Tombs differ in significance. Men differ as widely in their death as in their life. In some graves sleeps dishonored dust, and over others angels keep watch. The great tombs of the world are centers of attraction and draw visitors for widely varying reasons.

The world turns towards Washington's tomb with peculiar reverence and love, but it stands around the marble balustrade encircling Napoleon's sarcophagus with feelings of awe tinged with a sense of the dread his shadow threw over the globe. The graves of Shakespeare and Milton, of Dante and Michelangelo all have their special meanings.

What is the distinctive mark upon the tomb that stood in Joseph's garden on that Sunday morning nineteen hundred years ago? This tomb was empty!

"He is risen," said the angel; "he is not here: behold the place where they laid him!" This was the distinguishing mark of that tomb. Other graves are visited and cherished by sorrowing friends or honored with worldwide distinction because of what they *do* contain, but this grave is the center of the world's faith and hope because of what it did *not* contain.

Its emptiness is its unique and supreme significance and glory. This was the first wonder of that wonderful morning which then broke upon the world.

The empty tomb is no unimportant incident in the narrative, something that we can loosely hold and lightly give up, as immaterial to belief in the resurrection.

But it is the initial link in the chain of evidence on which other links depend, the very fountain of this fact.

No other event of this morning is more emphatically pushed out into prominence and more clearly supported.

Paul, who investigated the fact of the resurrection on the ground, cross-examining the eyewitnesses (Gal. 1:18), believed in the empty grave. His statement "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3–4) clearly implies that his body was raised as it had been buried, leaving the tomb empty.

All efforts to break this first link in the chain of evidence for this fact have failed.

The belief in the empty tomb cannot be derived from Jewish prophecy, or from Oriental myths, or from the expectation or desire or invention of the disciples. The fact of this belief is indubitable, and the only way to account for it is by the reality of the event itself. There stands the empty tomb in Joseph's garden near to Jerusalem as a well-attested historical fact, and it is a convincing and eloquent witness that the crucified Christ who was buried in it also came out of it and was no more holden of death.

"He is not here." The grave was no place for him after his work was done and he had extracted the fangs of death and accomplished his triumphal victory over it.

"He is risen even as he said." He had said it and now he had fulfilled it.

Things had a habit of coming to pass "even as he said." Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his words shall fail.

5. The Ascension

We have come to the closing scene; and it is worthy of its place as the conclusion and climax of this wonderful life.

Had the story of the resurrection of Jesus been an invention or a myth, it would have been a hard matter to know how to bring his life on earth to an end. Christ was risen and his work was finished: what shall be done with him? He must not be permitted to die again, and he cannot remain.

The critical point in a story is its conclusion.

It must keep up interest to the end and close at the highest point, or it breaks down and fails.

How shall this life, that opened with angel minstrelsy in the skies and was attended with many wonderful works and has just emerged from the tomb and been crowned with the wonder and glory of the resurrection, be brought to an appropriate and worthy conclusion? What novelist or poet or painter would dare attempt such a task?

But give the pen to one of these humble and unlettered followers of Jesus and he will write a conclusion that it is a fitting culmination and climax to the whole story, and that, viewed simply as a piece of literature and work of art, is one of the most perfect and beautiful things in all the books of the world.

How simple and natural it is, how free from all art and effort, affectation and self-consciousness, how true to reality. The man that wrote the story of the ascension of Jesus, we feel, did not invent it and never thought of inventing anything. Nobody invented it, it was fact, the disciples simply related it, and here it is as found in the concluding verses of Mark (but more fully given in Luke): "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."

Who can gild that gold, or paint that lily, or throw a perfume on that bit of literature?

It is art surpassing art, simply because the writer had no other purpose than to tell what happened on that day at Bethany when the risen Lord made his farewell appearance to his disciples and was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

He came under the power of a higher gravitation and was loosed from the bonds of space and time and disappeared in the spiritual world. His whole life had been an ascent.

He ever grew in life and loveliness. His very cross only lifted him to a loftier point of glory, closer to God. He could climb no higher on earth. It was perfectly natural, then, that the next step would carry him up into heaven; he simply went to his own place.

And so this final appearance put a seal upon his whole mission on earth as finished and sent him back to his heavenly home.

Divine worship was henceforth the proper attitude toward and tribute to such a risen Lord, and it has widened down through the centuries and is making the world vocal with his grace and glory to-day.

The disciples did the logical thing when after the ascension "they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed." This word we are still teaching and preaching around the globe and signs are still following and attesting that Jesus is Lord of all and the Saviour of the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. If faith in the resurrection of Christ is abandoned, what will become of Christianity?
2. How many appearances did the risen Christ make to his disciples? Give the circumstances of each of them.
3. What was the first false theory to account for the empty tomb of Jesus?
4. On what grounds did Paul rest his faith in the resurrection of Christ?
5. In what ways may we preach everywhere this fact and faith?

LESSON III—APRIL 15

Transfiguration and Service

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Faith and Prayer Can Do.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Meaning of the Transfiguration.

Golden Text: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. John 15:5.

Devotional Reading: John 15:1–8.

Lesson Passage: Mark 9:2–29.

Lesson Text: Mark 9:2–8, 18, 25–29

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter and James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them;

3 And his garments became glistering, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them.

4 And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5 And Peter answereth and saith to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

6 For he knew not what to answer; for they became sore afraid.

7 And there came a cloud overshadowing them: and there came a voice out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son: hear ye him.

8 And suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

18 And wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able.

25 And when Jesus saw that a multitude came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26 And having cried out, and torn him much, he came out: and *the boy* became as one dead; insomuch that the more part said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up; and he arose.

28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, *How is it* that we could not cast it out?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Transfigured Jesus.

2. Two Heavenly Visitors.

3. A Mistaken Proposal.

4. Cloud and Voice.

5. The Vanished Vision.

O Master, it is good to be
Entranced, enwrapt, alone with thee;
Till we, too, change from grace to grace,
Gazing on that transfigured face.

The unexpected and startling announcement of Jesus to his disciples of his coming crucifixion must have shrouded them in gloom: it seemed the utter denial and destruction of all their hopes. They needed a glimpse of the divinity that was hidden in their Master and of the glory that lay beyond the cross to disperse the darkness and sustain and inspire them. Possibly also Jesus himself, as he drew near to his passion, needed a fresh assurance of the Father's presence and love.

The transfiguration met this need for both disciple and Master.

It was a revelation of power and glory that the cross could not crush. It shot its splendor through the gloom and kindled despondent faith and hope into new strength and joy.

1. The Transfigured Jesus

The transfiguration is a mountain scene and ranks with Sinai and Calvary among the loftiest summits in the range of sacred story. Jesus with Peter and James and John, his most intimate and trusted disciples, climbed the mountain slope to a place of prayer. It was night, and Jesus engaged in communion with the Father.

Presently the disciples were aware that a mysterious change was being wrought in the dim and dusky figure of the Master.

His face began to shine and his clothing to emit gleams and sparkles of light. The strange luminosity grew into effulgence streaming out of him until his countenance was radiant and his raiment dazzling white. His whole person seemed steeped in splendor, a glory from within was pouring through the veil of his flesh.

There is a mystery here whose border we may not cross.

There were divine possibilities in Jesus of which his transfiguration gives us a glimpse and hint. It would seem that his divinity was hidden by the veil of his humanity and that for a moment its glory was kindled and burned through.

In a weaker degree Moses was transfigured when, after his forty days of communion with God on Sinai, his face shone: and they that looked on Stephen at his trial "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Thus even the human spirit, when intensely kindled, shines through the flesh and in a degree transfigures it.

Of Daniel Webster it is recorded that, for several hours after he had delivered his great oration at Bunker Hill, his face wore an indescribably grand expression that awed those who came into his presence. Character carves the countenance. Sydney Smith said of Francis Horner that the Ten Commandments were written on his face. "Human physiognomy," says Victor Hugo, "is formed by the conscience and the life, and is the result of a multitude of mysterious excavations."

Some have become so sanctified by the Holy Spirit that they wear a heavenly aspect and are verily transfigured into the likeness of Christ.

It was as he prayed that Jesus was transfigured, and it was after forty days of communion with Jehovah that the face of Moses shone.

Prayer kindles the soul into intense consciousness of God, and it is then that the glory of holiness shines through.

2. Two Heavenly Visitors

Two visitors from the heavenly world now appeared upon the scene. Moses and Elijah, themselves luminous with heavenly light, talked with Jesus.

Few facts in the gospel story are so deeply and richly significant.

Moses, representing the law, and Elijah, representing the prophets, are here associated with Jesus, the Messiah whom they foretold and prepared the way for, thus binding the old and the new Dispensations together into unity.

Redemption is the same through all ages and forms one plan.

Immortality is here brought to light. These are travelers returned from the other world. Many centuries before, they quitted the habitation of earth, yet here they are alive.

Death does not end all.

They had bodies as on earth, only they were transfigured with glory, etherial and evanescent, illustrating the resurrection body of the saints. They were recognized as Moses and Elijah, indicating the fact of heavenly recognition.

We shall know each other there.

They were in possession of the same human faculties they had on earth, showing that death and heaven do not change the essential constitution and individuality of personality.

The redeemed spirit is purified and glorified, but it is the same soul.

They talked with Jesus, for the redeemed are still interested in the affairs of earth. And what was the subject of their conversation? "His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Redemption is still the subject of the greatest interest in heaven, and the very angels desire to look into it, and its point of intensest glory is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

If the heavenly inhabitants are so interested in this redeeming sacrifice, God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. A Mistaken Proposal

As the visitors were departing, impulsive Peter spoke up in a bewildered state of mind, saying, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

It was good for the disciples to be there.

This revelation of the hidden power and glory in Jesus must have scattered their doubts and wonderfully revived and strengthened their faith. In its splendor the cross was robbed of its shadows and terror. It threw the gate of heaven ajar and gave them a glimpse of the glory within. Such a Master they could trust and worship.

It is good for us that the disciples were eyewitnesses of this event.

Their record has inimitable marks of truthfulness, and the transfiguration is proof of the divinity of Jesus and of immortality.

As we stand in imagination on this mountain, Jesus shines upon us as the Son of God, faith grows clear and strong, our blessed dead come near, and heaven lies around us.

In so far as the Spirit of God dwells in us and streams through us, we are transfigured, and this is good for us, even the most blessed experience of life.

Yet, blessed as was this experience, Peter was mistaken in his desire and proposal to protract it. Jesus had other work to do than enjoy his glory, and the heavenly visitors could not tarry long on earth.

The Mount of Transfiguration is not a place to dwell: too much work is waiting for us on the plain below.

It is good for us to climb the mount of meditation and prayer and see God face to face and be transfigured before him, but we should not stay there too long. Religious rapture should not become a luxury that causes us to forget the great world lying in sin and want.

Prayerful meditation on the mount must be combined with active mercy on the plain to form the full-orbed Christian life.

4. Cloud and Voice

A cloud now overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him."

The cloud was a symbol of God's presence, but one that hid him from view. The voice was the voice of God, setting his seal upon Jesus as his Son and directing faith, obedience and love to him. The cloud shut the mystery and intolerable splendor of the Father's face out of sight, but the voice brought him near and declared his will.

The cloud concealed and the voice revealed.

This is the method of God in all his ways. He always hides much from us and yet lets us know enough to do his will.

It is the glory of God to conceal things. He hides them that we may find them out, and this search is our education.

The simplest and most familiar thing is enveloped in a cloud. And God, the Infinite and Eternal, who inhabiteth eternity and jewels his garments with burning suns, who by searching can find him out? "Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of him!" So God walks through the world trailing clouds of glory.

Yet this cloud does not envelope and obscure our duty.

There is an infinite expanse of mystery which we cannot penetrate and explore, but there is always an edge next to us which we can see that makes plain what we are to do: there is a cloud, but out of the cloud comes a voice. Nature hides much from us, but she takes care to let us know enough to do her will.

Great as is the mystery of God, yet we can know enough about him to live in harmony with him.

No one need be lost because he is involved in a cloud of mystery: God will let him know the truth that will save him. Out of the very heart of the mystery that conceals God comes the voice, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him."

Jesus is the full revelation of God: he that hath seen him hath seen the Father.

He has authority to speak in the name of God: hear him.

Hear him as he speaks of the way of sin and forgiveness: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

Hear him as he speaks of the way of life: "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Hear him as he speaks of trouble: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."

Hear him as he speaks of death: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live."

Hear him as he speaks of the beyond: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you."

Hear him, and the shadows will lift from your path and your feet will find the way of life.

Thus the disciples were guided and strengthened and the Master himself was made calm and strong to bear his cross.

5. The Vanished Vision

The voice died away in the silence, the cloud melted into the invisible, and Jesus was found alone.

The transfiguration glory had faded from his person and he was his ordinary self.

Moses and Elijah had fulfilled their mission to earth and had vanished into the unseen world whence they came. The affrighted disciples were bidden to arise. Life resumed its accustomed course.

The vision splendid had faded into the light of common day.

Intense ecstatic experiences cannot long continue. Nerves would snap and the brain break down. We cannot always live on the mountain top.

Peter thought to retain Moses and Elijah, but they were not needed and were permitted to depart.

Jesus only is enough for us.

The disciples held their peace and told no man. They did not boast of their experience and go around blabbing it out. Some things we must not tell.

Climb the mount of prayer and communion until you are transfigured before God: then come down into the world and say nothing about it, but get to work and heal some troubled soul.

This Jesus did. Down on the plain the disciples were trying in vain to cure an epileptic boy (Matt. 17:14). Left without the Master, their faith was not sufficient for the task.

He spoke the calm word that restored the boy to his right mind. "How is it," they asked, "that we could not cast it out?" And he said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing, save prayer."

Some things we cannot do until we can pray with and are energized by mighty faith, and then we can remove mountains and cast out demons.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give other instances of the power of the mind over the body.
2. Why do not Moses and Elijah visit us?
3. Can we always live in a state of revival?
4. Why should we not tell too much about our private religious life?
5. How can we get power to cast evil out of the world?

LESSON IV—APRIL 22

Jesus and the Home

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Being a Christian at Home.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian Family.

Golden Text: Honor thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise). Ephesians 6:2.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 6:1–9.

Lesson Passage: Mark 10:1–16.

Lesson Text: Mark 10:2–9, 13–16

2 And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? trying him.

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5 But Jesus said unto them, for your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

6 But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife;

8 And the two shall become one flesh: so that they are no more two, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

13 And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God.

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.

16 And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Question about Divorce.

2. A Permanent Union.

3. The Disciples and the Children.

4. Jesus and the Children.

5. Children and the Kingdom.

The home is the social unit or foundation stone of human society, and according as it stands or falls will all human welfare prosper or decline. Any weakness or disorder in the home is one of the gravest

perils of society, for it unlooses the bonds that hold it together and undermines its very foundations.

The home is the heart of our human world and sustains the same relation to its health and vitality as does the heart to the body.

The Christian home is one of the glories of Christianity, and we must maintain it or Christianity will wither and Christian civilization will go the way of pagan Rome.

1. A Question about Divorce

Soon after the transfiguration the Pharisees came to Jesus with a question, a favorite method with them of attacking him. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? trying him." They may have been testing his knowledge of the law as a Rabbi, but deeper down in their minds was the more sinister purpose of catching him in a trap.

Their hostility was now unconcealed and they were spreading a net before him.

Jesus instantly threw them back on their own knowledge of the law by asking them the pertinent question, "What did Moses command you?" They were ready with the answer, based on Deut. 24:1–4: "And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away." To this Jesus answered, "For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife."

Here Jesus first admits that a provision for divorce was incorporated in their law.

But he explains that this was an accommodation to their hardness or coarseness of nature. They were yet so low in the ethical and social scale that it was expedient to lower the law to their level, to meet them on their own ground so as to educate them and lead them up to higher ground.

This is a principle that applies to very much in the Mosaic legislation and social practice of the olden time.

The Mosaic sanction of polygamy and slavery and ruthless destruction of enemies in war and other like things can only be tolerated and in some degree justified on this ground.

But Jesus at once corrected Moses, as he repeatedly did, by appealing to a higher law incorporated in the very creation and constitution of man.

In the beginning, as set forth in Genesis, God made man male and female, each of which is only a partial person, and when joined in marriage "they are no more two, but one flesh."

This is the deepest bond of union in the marriage relation and such union is not to be lightly broken. This is the ideal towards which all light and leading up the scale of ethical and spiritual development moves and which we of superior attainment should reach and hold.

We with our Christian light have passed beyond the Mosaic code adapted to a lower ethical development and should live on the higher plane on which the marriage tie is held to be ideally inviolate.

Of course there are still exceptions and Jesus himself allowed one of these in his day (Matt. 19:9); whether there are others in our day is a question on which Christian scholars and sociologists differ.

But that we have gone too far in admitting exceptions and causes of divorce can hardly be doubted.

The divorce problem in our country is one of our greatest national evils and perils as the ratio of divorces to marriages in America far exceeds that of any other country and has increased fourfold in the last fifty years.

This is awakening alarm in many quarters and we should take every proper measure to regulate divorce more rigidly and limit this evil.

2. A Permanent Union

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The permanence of this union is thus planted deep in the work of creation and human constitution.

Every ground of family welfare demands that the marriage tie be permanent.

On this rest the stability of the family and the training of the children and the whole health and happiness of the home. When this tie is

lightly regarded and dissolved, the home goes to pieces and its wreckage floats off on the currents of the world.

Few evils are so destructive of all human good as unfaithful marriage relations and broken homes. God has put the home together, and let not man put it asunder.

But divorce is not the only way the marriage tie may be sundered and the home broken up.

This tie is not only physical but is mainly spiritual.

It is a union of hearts and souls in indissolvable ties of affection and faithfulness that forms the sure permanence of this union. God made it, but man can unmake it by his unfaithfulness.

The marriage union will not continue in its right relation and fine atmosphere and full flower unless means are used to keep it so. In order that this love may grow deeper and richer both husband and wife must cherish and nourish it.

Those fine expressions of courtesy and appreciation by which he won her heart, may he now cease these attentions and treat her as a common thing and starve her heart? And has she no responsibilities in keeping this mutual affection pure and strong? May she drop all those attractions and winsome arts by which she wooed his love, and grow careless and slatternly in dress and manner and cease to show any affection for him?

It is often such little rifts in the flute of love that, being slowly widened, finally silence the music.

All arts and attractions, gifts and graces should be used to feed the flames of love and keep them burning brightly on the altars of the heart. When this flame goes out, it leaves very bitter ashes that may be worse than death.

But if the relation be sealed with love, no rift will appear in the flute, and its music will keep in tune and grow richer and sweeter with all the years.

3. The Disciples and the Children

Parents were now bringing their little children to Jesus that he should touch them, "and the disciples rebuked them."

They thought these people were intruding their children on the Master in a way that would annoy him and interfere with his work.

The children were bothering Jesus and were a nuisance on such an occasion and let them be taken out of the way. These rough rude disciples had little appreciation of the place of children in the kingdom, their essential worth and the way in which Jesus would regard them.

Such views of children have not yet wholly passed out of the world and even out of the church.

Sometimes preachers evince annoyance at a crying baby in the audience and may make the poor mother feel mortified in the presence of the congregation. Long enough, too, has the church failed to appreciate the worth and place of children in the kingdom of heaven, though it is rapidly advancing at this point.

Even some parents fail to estimate and care for their children as they should and may consider them a burden in their fashionable life and may commit their care and training to nurses of whom little as to their fitness for such training and of their influence on the children may be known.

We pay a terrible price for such attitudes towards the little ones.

4. Jesus and the Children

Jesus instantly showed a different attitude and spirit towards these children. "Suffer the little children to come unto me; and forbid them not." "And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them."

This is one of the most significant and charming scenes in the life of Jesus.

He appreciated the child as a child of God of infinite worth, our most precious treasure and greatest responsibility.

Instinctively the little children went into his arms and felt at home.

His heart of love and winsome words and gracious manner overcame their shyness and won their confidence as he "blessed them, laying his hands upon them." The painter and the poet, the tune-maker and the

hymn-writer, have seized upon this scene and portrayed and embroidered it with all the gifts of their genius. We could better part with some of the deep points of Paul's theology than with this charming scene.

The Christian world has rightly appreciated it and put it in the center of the ministry of Jesus.

Truly are our children secure and blessed when they are "safe in the arms of Jesus."

5. Children and the Kingdom

Still greater honor did Jesus put upon children. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." Thus a little child was made to rebuke and teach these fault-finding disciples.

There is something in a child that is the greatest and most precious thing in the world.

Its innocence and beauty, its simplicity and humility and perfect trust, are not these the finest blossoms of life?

Even scientific men are telling us this. "The first and last step in the education of scientific judgment," said Faraday, "is humility." And Huxley said that if we would enter the kingdom of knowledge we must sit down before it in the spirit of a little child.

Scientists have been coming to some wonderful conclusions. They tell us that a child is higher up on the scale of evolution than a man. Its relatively large brain and small face, its delicate bony skeleton, its perfect instincts and quick intuitions, are the marks of a higher organization than that of man. Man as he grows in some degree retrogrades.

The child is the prophecy of a higher type of humanity. If we want to see what kind of men nature will make in the future, we must look at a child.

"If we turn," says Havelock Ellis, "to what we are accustomed to regard as the highest human types, as represented by men of genius, we shall find a striking approximation to the child-type. The average man of genius is short and large-brained—the two chief characteristics of the child—and his general facial expression, as well as his temperament, recall the child. The progress of our race has been a progress in youthfulness."

But who made this discovery long before these scientific men? Open the gospels and find the answer.

In leading us to a child as our teacher and example Jesus did not lead us backward but forward. In getting more of the child spirit we are getting forward into the coming man; yea, we are attaining unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This upsets and reverses some of our standards of judgment. In proportion as a man is truly learned, is he truly modest; and as he becomes great he becomes childlike. It is the child spirit that we need in our hearts.

This will solve many of our troubles and give us peace. Then will heaven lie around us through all our days as in our blessed infancy.

Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild,
Upright, simple, free from art,
Make me as a weaned child;
From distrust and envy free,
Pleased with all that pleases thee.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Are any improvements needed in our divorce laws?
2. What can we do to stop the causes of divorce back in the home?
3. What is the importance of religious education in the home and church?
4. What has Christianity done for the child?
5. How can we acquire the child spirit?

LESSON V—APRIL 29

The Cost of Discipleship

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Supreme Choice.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Peril of Riches.

Golden Text: Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also. Matt. 6:21.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:1–5.

Lesson Passage: Mark 10:17–27; 12:41–44.

Lesson Text: Mark 10:17–27; 12:41–44

17 And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, *even* God.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother.

20 And he said unto him, Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth.

21 And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

22 But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked round, about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, Then who can be saved?

27 Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God.

41 And he sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42 And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing.

43 And he called unto him his disciples and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they that are casting into the treasury:

44 For they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***A Youth of Many Good Parts.***
2. ***Yet Not Satisfied.***
3. ***One Thing Lacking.***
4. ***A Sorrowful Departure.***
5. ***A Standard of Giving.***

A man may have many good parts and beautiful virtues and yet, lacking one thing have a fatal defect, just as a watch may have perfect works and a richly embossed and jeweled case, and yet, lacking a mainspring or one tiny wheel, be wholly useless as a keeper of time.

This is the lesson written broadly across this dramatic story.

1. A Youth of Many Good Parts

Combining the facts given in the several narratives of the Gospels we find in this young man a character of exceptional worth and interest.

He had youth, and this is a great boon and splendid capital in life.

The body glows with health, the intellect is keen and bright, the memory has grip, imagination is vivid, and hope runs high. Life foams and sparkles. Youth holds the future in its hands and can carve its own destiny. It is a grand thing to be a young man in this wide-thinking, swift-moving day.

The young man also had wealth, and this also is a blessing.

Wealth lies at the root of our civilization. It releases us from slavery and lets us up into a higher freer life. It is a means of obtaining the things that are good and beautiful. Rightly gained it is an honor to a man: for it speaks of his industry and thrift, his foresight and plan and power, and especially of the service he has rendered to others. For no one can honestly get rich himself without helping to make others rich also. Great as is the power of wealth for evil, it must not be forgotten that greater still is its power for good.

This youth, further, had education, and this is a still higher crown and blessing.

The ignorant man is not yet fully born, has not come into possession of himself, is not yet unpacked.

Education is developed intelligence and power.

It was not brawn that built that business block or swung yonder bridge into the air, but brain. A developed mind in its dignity, its pleasures and its power is one of the noblest possessions and attainments of life.

This youth also had an influential position, and this is a high dignity.

It implies intellectual and moral capacity. It widens and multiplies power.

Above all, this youth was unspotted in character.

Character is the diamond that scratches every stone. It is the brightest jewel a man can wear and is one possession that cannot be filched away from him. Let him be stripped of everything else, yet if his character remains untouched he is still rich and strong.

Youth, wealth, education, position and character—these points embrace about all the good this life affords.

They are the world's gospel. It would seem that when a young man has these there is nothing more that he could desire. This young man had them all. His foot was on the top rung of the ladder. He had made his mark.

Doubtless he was applauded and envied as one who had made life a brilliant success; and doubtless he was universally regarded as one that was completely satisfied and joyously happy.

2. Yet Not Satisfied

Yet he was not satisfied.

Notwithstanding his youth, wealth, education, position and character, there was a secret yearning and trouble in his heart, a great void in his soul. And he came to Jesus crying out for something better, even everlasting life.

So is it ever with us. In our blindness we think the things of this world would satisfy us.

One thinks, "If I could only blot out my wasted years and recover my youth and begin life over again, I would ask nothing more." Another thinks, "If I could only get through college and step out into life equipped with an education, I would have all I ask." Another says, "When I reach a position of influence, when I get that office, I shall rest on my laurels and be content." And many a one imagines, "When I have made my fortune, when I reach the hundred thousand or million dollar line, I shall stop satisfied."

In all these thoughts men are deceiving themselves.

No sooner do they obtain these things than they want something more. Often the more of them a man has, the more restless and dissatisfied he is.

They feed the lower but not the higher nature.

They do not reach the deepest needs of life, forgiveness for sin, comfort in sorrow, faith and guidance in the presence of the mystery in which we are environed. They do not satisfy the religious nature of man. They leave out God.

The immortal spirit in us may have its voice stifled in the rush of business and the whirl of pleasure, but there are times when it will cry out and cannot be hushed.

3. One Thing Lacking

How did Jesus receive this young ruler kneeling before him? Did he open the door of his kingdom and let him in as he was?

No, the young ruler was not a saved man and was not admitted into the kingdom.

What a light does this throw upon Jesus and upon his kingdom! Had he been a merely human teacher or founder of an earthly kingdom, how gladly would he have received this wealthy convert and powerful accession to his cause! But, much as he loved the young ruler, he no more relaxed his supreme demand for him than he would for publicans and harlots.

The kingdom of God is no respecter of persons and all must enter through the same narrow way.

And Jesus said unto him, "One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

What a searchlight does this throw into the young ruler's heart?

Jesus looked through his riches and honors and moralities, the outer appearances that men saw only, into the central spirit of his life and saw that it had a selfish core. All his good qualities were centered in his own interest; he was living for himself.

To break him of this wrong motive at the root of his life, Jesus commanded him to sell all and give to the poor.

Not that this is always necessary to salvation: but it was necessary in his case, and it may be necessary in our case.

The meaning of some loss or sorrow in our life may be that we must give up all that we may give ourselves to Christ.

Then to shift his self-centered life to its true center, Jesus said to him, "Come, follow me."

The one thing lacking in the young man was the total surrender of his heart and life to Christ and to God.

His heart was not right; and being wrong there he was wrong everywhere else.

The one thing that admits the soul into the kingdom is faith in Christ: faith that takes up the cross: the cross of penitence and confession and obedience, of service and sacrifice. We cannot do these things perfectly but we can make a beginning, and this beginning is the turning-point of life, the one thing needful that carries us into the kingdom.

Hence how important is this one thing?

How important is any one thing that is fundamental? A will may be just in its distribution of property and generous in its charities and yet, lacking the signature or a single stroke of the pen, be invalid and not worth a dollar to anybody.

So there is one act and state of soul that is vital to eternal life, and when this is lacking all things else are vain.

Men are disposed to think that if they have many excellent qualities they have enough and may be saved without Christ. But the watch without the mainspring has many perfect parts and yet it will not keep time.

He that has many good things and yet lacks the one essential thing is not permitted to pass even in this world; neither can he pass in the spiritual world.

It is not our good things, however many and beautiful they may be, that save us, but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; and when this is lacking we lack the essential thing and cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

4. A Sorrowful Departure

" But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions."

His wealth was so deeply woven into the web of his life, the world had thrown such a spell over him, that he would not break away. And so he turned his face from the kingdom and we hear of him no more.

Young men, make no mistake at this point in life. Play not fast and loose with great questions of eternity. Live not a life that goes no deeper than the flesh. Do not confuse outer appearances with inner realities: morality with eternal life. Do not imagine that you can turn your face from Jesus Christ and be as good as ever. Whatever separates you from Christ, whether some outer obstruction or inner reluctance, put it from you.

Clear the path between your soul and God. Hear the voice of Christ, and come, take up the cross, and follow him.

5. A Standard of Giving

We pass to a scene in the last week of the ministry of Jesus which is linked with the first passage by its connection with the subject of the use of wealth. Jesus sat down over against the treasury and noted how the people were giving.

Though he was in the world on a redemptive spiritual mission, yet he was not above looking into the financial doings of people.

Money matters were not a bit of worldly business which did not concern him, for everything concerned him.

Still he sits over against every treasury private and public and notes the amounts deposited therein and to what uses they are applied.

The Christian life covers all our affairs and takes in both how we get and how we spend our money.

A practical question that confronts us at this point is, How shall we divide our money between that which falls to our use and that which goes into the service of the Lord?

As a matter of fact, it all belongs to him and it is entrusted to us only as stewards so that whether we devote it to our personal use or to his service we are using it as his money.

However, it may be useful to have some standard or rule by which we may determine these two portions.

The standard indicated by this incident is that we are to compare what we give with what we have left and consider whether the proportion is one we can justify.

The rich people were casting much into the temple treasury, but they had much larger portions left.

They were only giving of their superabundance and were still living in luxury and ostentatious display.

But the poor widow, though she gave only a few cents, yet gave more than all the rich people because she cast in all she had and gave up her very living.

Her gifts cut deep into her comforts and necessities and cost her life itself, and therefore she exceeded the wealthy worshipers in her devotion and won praise from Jesus that was denied to them.

Here is a practical way of measuring our gifts: How much do we have left?

Are we only snipping off some of the fringes of our superfluities and denying ourselves no luxury or comfort? Then we fall below the standard of this poor widow, and in her poverty she shall go into the kingdom of God before us.

This standard would pour into all the treasuries of the Lord gifts that would fill them to overflowing and carry forward our work on a mighty tide.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was a ruler in the synagogue?
2. What part does moral character or good works play in our salvation?
3. How may we play the part of the rich young ruler to-day?
4. What special danger is there in large inherited wealth?
5. What other rule of giving is found in the New Testament?

LESSON VI—MAY 6

Greatness through Service

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Be Truly Great.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus' Standard of Greatness.

Golden Text: The Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Mark 10:45.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 42:1–7.

Lesson Passage: Mark 9:33–50; 10:35–45.

Lesson Text: Mark 10:35–45

35 And there come near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Teacher, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 And they said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on *thy* left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39 And they said unto him, We are able. And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40 But to sit on my right hand or on *my* left hand is not mine to give; but *it is for them* for whom it hath been prepared.

41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John.

42 And Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them.

43 But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister;

44 And whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all.

45 For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Mistaken Request.

2. Ignorant Prayers.

3. Crowns That Cannot Be Given.

4. Indignant Disciples.

5. How to Become Great.

There is an urge in us driving us to seek great things, but everything depends on the kind of greatness we are seeking, and in nothing can we make bigger blunders than in our ambitions and desires and prayers.

Even prophets and apostles illustrate this danger and folly and some of the wisest men have made foolish choices and tragic mistakes.

The safeguard at this point is to set up the true standard of greatness and object of ambition and strive towards it.

1. A Mistaken Request

Jesus had just announced his approaching crucifixion, and at this inappropriate time and in strange contrast with this sorrowful news James and John made an attempt to forestall rivals and get the chief offices in the kingdom they believed was near at hand.

They approached the matter cautiously by first saying, "Teacher, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee."

A very dangerous request is this to be granted to them or to us.

In few things can we show greater unwisdom and blindness than in our prayers, and if we were sure of receiving whatsoever we ask we might soon work our own ruin. Christ promises us, not whatsoever we ask, but whatsoever we ask, as he said, "in my name," a condition of heart that will keep us from foolish requests.

The question of James and John betrays some consciousness or suspicion in their own minds that they were venturing on doubtful and dangerous ground.

Jesus met their question with the answer, "What would ye that I should do for you?"

This forced them to bring their desire and scheme more vividly before their own minds and consciences and gave them a chance to reconsider its meaning and motives.

The two brothers, however, rushed on with their request: "Grant unto us to sit, one on thy right, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory."

What a glaring misconception of the teaching and spirit of Jesus and what a flagrant exhibition of selfish ambition!

Jesus had taught the disciples concerning his kingdom and had told them of thrones on which they would sit. But they had persisted in

interpreting the kingdom in a worldly sense and were dreaming of an earthly empire of power and splendor in which they would hold the chief offices.

James and John thought it was time they were making sure of their places.

Possibly they feared Peter as their chief rival and were trying to steal a march on him and get there first. Had these selfish brothers obtained their request, would they not have fallen out over which one was to have the superior right hand, and which the inferior left?

Matthew tells us (20:20) that the mother of James and John made this request. If (as some suppose) she was the sister of the mother of Jesus, so that her sons were his cousins, or at least had some tie of relationship, this was an attempt to bring family influence to bear on Jesus to induce him to take care of his relatives.

It seems shocking to find these selfish motives and political wires working within the sacred circle of the twelve, but the disciples were remarkably human, and such motives and means are at work within the church to this day.

2. Ignorant Prayers

The request drew from Jesus the reply, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

James and John in making such a request did not know what they were talking about, and ignorance of the real meaning and spirit of our prayers is common enough among us all.

They were looking, as they believed, at a dazzling throne on which they imagined themselves sitting in power and glory, but they did not see the long path of persecution and blood that led up to it, the baptism of fire they must pass through to reach it. They mistook the nature of the throne and the means by which it is attained.

It is easy to fasten our eyes on high ends and overlook the means, to visualize the shining reward and overlook the service and sacrifice by which it is obtained.

"The average admirer," says Israel Zangwill, "conceives the artist as living in a world of beautiful dreams, sweet with the incense of per-

petually swung censers, and knows nothing of the artist's agonies, or of the craftman's sweatings, that go to the making of beautiful things; sees always the completed design, and never the workman scraping the paint, or wetting the back of the canvas, or tossing sleeplessly under the weight of a ruined picture."

The cross lies between us and every worthy attainment, and we must not think we gain the prize without paying the price. Education, mastery in any art or profession or business, success in any field, is found at the end of a long and often hard road.

Men who worthily hold high places were not carried on flowery beds of ease up to those summits, but they fought to win those heights.

3. Crowns That Cannot Be Given

Jesus now gave his decision and apportioned the disciples their share in his blessing. They should indeed drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism.

They could not take him and leave his cup; they could not share his crown without first sharing his cross.

This prophecy was fulfilled, as James was the first disciple to suffer martyrdom (Acts 12:1-2), and John lived a long life of labor and persecution.

The cup of Christ's sufferings is pressed to the lips of every true disciple of his.

Discipleship so identifies us with him that we must fight with him against the sinful world and encounter the world's hatred for him. The form and contents of the cup may differ from age to age, but it contains the same ingredient of service and sacrifice and all disciples must drink it.

Jesus next gave a disappointing decision as to the offices and laid down a deep principle in his kingdom: "But to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared."

Honors in the kingdom of God are not given by favoritism but are won by fitness, is the principle here enunciated.

James and John thought that honors in this kingdom could be had by "influence" and by asking for them, and they did not propose to be slow in the asking. There are honors that can be obtained and given in this way. Napoleon bestowed crowns and kingdoms on his brothers and relatives as we give toys to our children.

But there are other crowns that cannot thus be given.

A father can give his boy a farm or a fortune, but he cannot in the same way give him an education; he can give him books, but not the knowledge in the books.

Mental and moral attainments cannot be given, but must be acquired.

Crowns in the kingdom of God are conditioned on character. This character must be acquired and developed through faith in and fellowship with Christ, and then the crown will come as fruit comes from the root.

The crown cannot create Christian character, but Christian character will create the crown.

Christ himself cannot break this eternal law of his kingdom, and so he cannot bestow crowns by arbitrary favor and caprice.

If we would sit with him we must first serve with him.

There is no room in his kingdom for favoritism, personal influence, combinations or schemes, but every crown represents merit and exactly fits the soul for which it is prepared.

4. Indignant Disciples

What did the other disciples think of this attempt of James and John to get ahead of them? "And when the ten heard of it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John."

Of course they were violently indignant and angry at these two pushing brothers, because they wanted the same things themselves!

Peter especially would feel outraged at the presumption of these two schemers who thus tried to get ahead of him and cut him out of his rightful place. Was he not the foremost disciple and chief spokesman

of the twelve, and should he not have the most conspicuous throne?

The same human nature was in all these men, and it threatened to break out into a violent quarrel again and again over this question of who should be greatest, and pushed its ugly presence right into the observance of the Lord's Supper and farewell meeting of Jesus with his disciples before the crucifixion. They were already stepping into the shadows of the cross, and here they were on the point of a bitter personal strife over the spoils of office.

How utterly did they miss the nature of the kingdom and the spirit of the Master, and how painfully must their angry faces and heated words have affected him.

Yet we must never forget that they were only such men as we are, and their conduct often holds the mirror to our own hearts and lives.

Men often grow angry at others for trying to do first the very thing they are secretly wanting to do themselves.

How often do we blame others for faults which are only too plainly sticking out of our own characters? Trying to pull a splinter out of another's eye when a great beam blocks up and blinds our own eye?

Let us not hold others to standards of conduct we do not ourselves observe and apply to them criticisms that we should first apply to ourselves.

5. How to Become Great

Jesus now took these quarreling disciples in hand and taught them once more a central principle of his kingdom.

He did not go at them impatiently and violently, but reasonably and gently.

He cited the Gentiles as illustrating selfish ambition and tyrannical rule. Such rule might be agreeable for those who exercised it, but it was hard for those under it.

This is still the principle of rule that controls in a large degree the governments and nations of the world.

Might makes right and the strongest will assert their strength over the weak. Hence all these wars amongst us. Was not the Great War

the most colossal illustration of this method and spirit the world ever saw?

Can we ever grow out of this spirit and dreadful strife into a better world?

Only as the spirit of Jesus pervades our civilization and molds it into his kingdom. He came to turn this old pagan world upside down and introduce this better way. He reversed the worldly maxim of seeking the highest place, crowding others out of the way and getting there first, and laid down as a law of life a new and better principle. "Whosoever would become great among you, shall be servant of all. For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Going down is the secret of going up.

The last shall be first, and the lowliest shall be loftiest. Men rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things. All the pages of history are starred with the names of heroes who have supremely served their human kind and then reaped the reward of imperishable honor.

Jesus himself did not simply lay this law down for others, but he was himself the most splendid incarnation of it the world ever saw and he is even now being crowned Lord of all.

Few can become great with worldly greatness, but all can win and wear the crown of this moral greatness which is the outcome and reward of unselfish faithful service.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What other mistaken suggestions did the disciples make to Jesus?
2. How can we keep from making wrong prayers?
3. What is the limiting condition of every true prayer?
4. What is the crown "that fadeth not away"?
5. Give illustrations of those who became great through service.

LESSON VII—MAY 13

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Kingly Qualities of Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus Asserts Messianic Authority.

Golden Text: Behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, having salvation. Zechariah 9:9.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 24:7–10.

Lesson Passage: Mark 11:1–33.

Lesson Text: Mark 11:1–10, 15–18

1 And when they draw nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth two of his disciples,

2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village that is over against you: and straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him.

3 And if any one say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, The Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him back hither.

4 And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door without in the open street; and they loose him.

5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had said: and they let them go.

7 And they bring the colt unto Jesus, and cast on him their garments; and he sat upon him.

8 And many spread their garments upon the way; and others branches, which they had cut from the fields.

9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, Hosanna; Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

10 Blessed *is* the kingdom that cometh, *the kingdom* of our father David: Hosanna in the highest.

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple, and began to cast them out that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves;

16 And he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple.

17 And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers.

18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, for all the multitude was astonished at his teaching.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Scene.

2. A Colt.

3. Enthusiasm.

4. Hosanna!

5. Criticism.

6. Business.

On the morning of Palm Sunday there was a great stir in Bethany and along the road leading to Jerusalem. It was understood that Jesus was to enter the city that day. The people were gathering in crowds and seemed bent on signaling his entrance with a popular demonstration.

Jesus for the first time permitted a public recognition and celebration of his rights as Messiah and King.

The end was approaching with fatal swiftness, and he had to offer himself as Messiah and Lord, even if it were only to be rejected.

1. The Scene

It was the springtime and nature had set the scene in a framework of beauty. A mass of fresh colors lay palpitating upon the landscape. The dark rich green of the olives covered the hillsides, the air was balmy with the breath of spring and fragrant with buds and bloom, along the eastern horizon stretched the blue rim of the mountains of Moab, and over it all flashed the splendor of an Oriental sky. A colt was obtained and the disciples, having thrown their robes over it, placed Jesus upon it, and the procession started.

It would not have compared in magnificence with many a procession that has attended the coronation of a king or the inauguration of a president; but it meant more for the world.

In the enthusiasm of their joy the people tore off branches from palm and olive trees and carpeted the road with greenery, and even cast their many-colored garments like a Persian rug on the way, while shouts rang in the air and out over the hills.

Slowly the procession wound up the Mount of Olives. At the summit the road takes a sharp turn to the north and the city suddenly breaks into view. The sight is an impressive spectacle even at this day, but in that day it was one of the wonders of the world. The city sat like a jeweled crown on the brow of Mount Zion. In the foreground rose the marble walls of the temple of stainless whiteness crowned with its glittering gilded roof, a mass of snow and gold; and over it all lay the spell of a thousand years of history crowded with patriotic and religious associations.

At the first sight of the city Jesus burst into tears. What an unaccountable interruption of the festivities of the hour!

Even in the midst of his triumphs and joys he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The procession swept down into the valley of Kedron and up the slope of Zion, gathering volume and intensifying its joy as it rolled along. It poured into the temple area and overflowed into the city. In the evening the crowds dispersed and Jesus quietly returned to Bethany.

Apparently nothing in the way of making Jesus King had been accomplished. His kingdom comes not with observation, pageantry and pomp.

2. A Colt

The incident of sending for a colt is instructive. Jesus directed two of his disciples to go into a neighboring village where they would find a colt, which they were to unloose and bring to him. If any one were to question them as to their authority they were to answer, "The Lord hath need of him."

By this title of Lord, Jesus is the universal Proprietor and maintains ownership over all things.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Our property, powers and attainments are rightfully his and ought to be instantly subject to his disposal.

Yet strange sovereignty is this which "hath need." The divine Christ must have a colt; the Lord of glory is stopped until one of his humblest creatures is brought to his aid!

"And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door." Unquestioning obedience followed the command and they found what he told them they would find. They might have raised objections, pointed out difficulties and dangers involved in such action, but they simply trusted Jesus and acted on his word.

This is the secret of a plain and peaceful life. We are trying to solve too many problems and to hew our own way through the world when we need only to trust God and let him order our steps.

3. Enthusiasm

All things were now ready and the procession started. Garments were cast down and greenery strewn along until the dusty road became

a carpeted and embroidered path fit for royalty, and the hills rang with shouts.

Several ideas were expressed in this action.

Disciples must prepare the way for Jesus.

He cannot go through the world on a triumphant march unless we go with him and before him and make a path for him. Human agencies may open the way along which the Spirit of Christ gets into human hearts and into the world.

This service costs sacrifice.

Garments must be cast down to make the way along which Christ walks. Things that are good and precious to us, our possessions, time and talents, our garments, the very necessities of life, life itself, must be cast down. Nothing is too costly and fine to become part of this path. The feet of Jesus should not touch the common dust, but should press upon our most necessary things.

And this path should be a path of beauty.

Art always has glorified the roadway of Jesus through the world with its most glorious productions, and this is fitting to him and his kingdom. The highway of salvation along which Jesus walks should not seem to be a hard and dusty road, but it should be so carpeted and festooned that the world will see that it is a way of pleasantness and a path of peace.

The most prominent feature of this procession was its enthusiasm.

These people were not afraid to shout.

They believed in Jesus with all their might and expressed their warm and urgent emotions in Oriental outbursts of joy. They were not ashamed of their King, and when the city was stirred and shaken with excitement and the question of the hour along the crowded streets was, "Who is this?" they boldly answered, "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

It took some courage to say that up in Jerusalem.

The people grew wild in their enthusiasm, and the hills near and far caught up and flung back their glad hosannas.

This is a spirit that is evaporating out of our religious life and that we need to keep and cherish.

We have grown so respectable and formal and reserved that in a religious meeting we can scarcely speak or move. Even the Methodists have ceased to shout or say Amen. We have frozen into religious icicles, and the Salvation Army soldiers are now doing all the shouting.

Enthusiasm is fire, it is life, it is God in us as the very word means. We need more of it and abundance of it, even though it offends some refinements of taste and breaks into some excesses, for it is the only religious life that will prepare the way for Christ. Frozen Christianity will never warm the world into life.

4. Hosanna!

The deepest meaning of this event was expressed in the constant cry of the multitude, "Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our Father David: Hosanna in the highest."

Jesus was not entering the city as a triumphant conqueror, trampling down its liberties and slaying its inhabitants as the Romans had done and were about to do. Neither was he coming to execute upon it just judgment. No sword was in his hand, over him floated no blood-stained banner.

His mission was salvation, his kingdom was peace.

He was coming to preach good tidings to the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound.

The Triumphal Entry was a picture and parable of his blessed progress through the world.

Since his advent history has been his majestic march. Eighteen centuries have traced his stately steppings across continents and over seas. The procession of believers attending him has ever been a constantly lengthening and broadening multitude and has now grown into a vast number that is filling the world.

And the shout that still attends this procession is, "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh."

It is a kingdom, not of war and force, sword and blood, or of meat and drink, wealth and pleasure, but of righteousness and peace.

It brings forgiveness and purity, brotherhood and love. As it rolls along it crushes old evils and leaves behind it a fairer world. Nothing can stop its progress as nothing can stop the rising of the sun. It is now pouring into heathen lands and will soon have moved around the world. Christ shall reign, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.

It is our mission as Christians to prepare for and bring in this kingdom of our Lord. We can delay and hinder his coming by our divisions and unfaithfulness, and we can also remove obstructions and help his advent and triumph by unity and zeal in his service.

5. Criticism

Criticism on this occasion was not lacking.

When was there ever a day or event so successful and good that somebody did not find fault?

We could infallibly name the critics on this occasion without looking on the record. "The Pharisees." Bigoted and blind to the last; never knowing the day of their visitation: zealous for the temple of the Lord while rejecting the Lord of the temple!

The enthusiasm had become so contagious that the very children were crying their hosannas, but the ministers of religion were looking on with scowling scornful faces.

It was the children, too, that their criticism seized upon and objected to.

Even yet young people cannot show unusual interest and earnestness and enthusiasm in the church without exciting the disapproval and displeasure of some critics. But Jesus answered that if the children should hold their peace the stones would cry out.

God loves children and Jesus hears them, and we in our assumed pompous authority should not think to silence them. Let the children speak and shout in the kingdom of God.

Having condemned the priests, Jesus left the city and went back to Bethany. The great day was over and apparently nothing had come of it: Jesus was not yet king. Doubtless the disciples had had high expectations and thought that the procession and banners and shouts would surely carry Jesus to his throne.

But Jesus himself had entertained no such expectations and experienced no disappointment, for he knew that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

6. Business

The day following the triumphal entry Jesus went into the temple and exercised kingly authority.

A shocking scene there met his view.

Immense numbers of animals were needed for the feasts and offerings, and worshipers bought these in Jerusalem; money also had to be exchanged so that the temple tax could be paid in the legal Hebrew coin.

This business had invaded the precincts of the temple.

The cattle and merchandise and traffic, the crowds and confusion, the clamorous hawking and haranguing of the noisy Oriental dealers, the cheating and frauds, were a wicked and intolerable nuisance in and desecration of the place of worship. Jesus ordered the merchants out and upset their tables, telling them they had made the house of prayer a den of thieves.

May we also invade the house of God with our mercenary affairs and spirit so as to repeat this very sin and scandal?

The noisy venders knew they were defiling the temple and quailed before and slunk away from the lofty righteousness of Jesus, the starry light that shone from his eyes and the divine majesty of his presence.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What do we have that Christ now needs?
2. How can we find out what part of our possessions Christ needs?

3. How can we generate and keep fresh our enthusiasm in the Christian life?

4. What are some of the forms the triumphal march of Christ now assumes?

5. In what ways may we unlawfully bring our business into God's house?

6. What kingly qualities did Jesus display on this occasion?

LESSON VIII—MAY 20

Jesus Teaching in the Temple

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Answers His Critics.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Love, the Law of the Kingdom.

Golden Text: He taught them as one having authority. Matt. 7:29.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:1–8.

Lesson Passage: Mark 12:13–44.

Lesson Text: Mark 12:13–17, 28–34

13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him in talk.

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one; for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God: Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?

15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why make ye trial of me? bring me a denarius, that I may see it.

16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at him.

28 And one of the scribes came and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all?

29 Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one;

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

31 The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he;

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Enemies Sent to Catch Jesus.*
2. *A True Yet Insincere Compliment.*
3. *A Cunning Question Frankly Answered.*
4. *An Important Question.*
5. *A Convincing Answer.*

The questions put to Jesus with a hostile purpose and his answers to them are an interesting study. These questions were often carefully and cleverly framed with the greatest ingenuity and cunning, so that it appeared that, answer them whichever way he would, Jesus would be impaled on the one or the other horn of a dilemma.

His answers were necessarily unpremeditated and extemporaneous, yet quick as a flash he made reply; and his answers always pierced through the duplicity and evil purpose of his inquisitors and sent them away discomfited and silenced.

He met their clever and sinister art with art more skillful still.

Often he turned their devices back upon them and hoist them with their own petard, caught them in their own trap.

Yet his answers were never mere evasions or clever tricks, but were candid and honest replies that simply told the truth.

Many Pharisees and scribes, learned pundits with ponderous questions, came to Jesus thinking they had him now, and then slunk away defeated and disgraced, an object of popular ridicule.

Jesus was gentle as a child to sincere and humble souls, but he could flash lightning against proud and conceited hypocrites.

On this occasion several parties came to Jesus in succession and he completely floored them all.

1. Enemies Sent to Catch Jesus

These opponents of Jesus at this time "send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him in talk." These men were afraid to go themselves, and so they sent others.

They got underlings to do their mean work while they themselves kept in the background.

This sneaking way of attacking others is still practiced among men, even in the church.

Many a man or woman, too cowardly to come out into the open with charges, will yet find a way of sending some one else to start rumors and sow suspicions and breed trouble.

Pharisees and Herodians were bitter enemies, as the one party opposed and the other supported the Roman rule, but they were made friends together in their common opposition to Jesus. They pretended to be humble and sincere men in search of light in their honest perplexity, whereas they were enemies seeking to injure Jesus.

The value of a question depends largely on the motive of the questioner.

A sincere question indicates an honest state of mind that is itself a condition and means of receiving truth; upon such a soul the light is sure to dawn. But an insincere captious question that is intended only to catch another or to entangle the subject in controversy, is born of a state of prejudice that will shut out the truth.

In nothing else is sincerity so important as in religion. If we ask religious questions to catch others we shall get caught ourselves.

We may assume a mask of feigned sincerity and even of piety when our real purpose is evil.

2. A True Yet Insincere Compliment

These Pharisees and Herodians approached Jesus with a carefully prepared introduction to their question that sounded highly complimentary. "Teacher," they said, "we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one; for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth thou teachest the way of God."

Could any introductory address be more laudatory?

They certify to the truthfulness of Jesus, that he knows the truth and speaks only the truth, so that in him there is no suspicion of falsity. To this spirit of truthfulness they also add the great virtue of courage, for he cares nothing for any one or for any consequences, but will speak the truth of God.

All this characterization was and is true, fitting Jesus to the letter.

Yet it is also true that these enemies did not believe a word of all this and were uttering insincere compliments only as a part of their trap to catch Jesus.

Some of the truest and finest things ever said of Christ have been uttered by his enemies who spoke better than they knew.

These hypocrites thought that by thus flattering Jesus they would lure him into confidence in them and lull him into a state of self-satisfaction in which he would be off his guard and easily fall a prey to their snare. They praised him to his face only that they might stab him in his back.

This art has not been lost, and Christ is often still spoken of in the most flattering terms by those who reject him and wound him to his heart.

3. A Cunning Question Frankly Answered

They were now ready with their question: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" We must admire the apparent frankness and reasonableness of the question in spite of the deadly trap it concealed.

It seemed perfectly legitimate and innocent, and yet it was a crafty snare and they felt sure it would catch Jesus.

It grew, of course, out of the political situation. Rome ruled Judea with a mailed fist and ruthlessly put down any restlessness in blood. The Jews, a proud and patriotic people who believed themselves a chosen nation with the right to rule over all the world, were chafing under this yoke and were continually plotting and at times breaking out into rebellion against it. So it seemed that Jesus would impale himself on one horn of this question whichever way he answered it. If he said the Jews should not pay the Roman tax he would be guilty of treason and bring down the Roman hand upon him. If he said the Jews should pay this hated tax he would be branded as a traitor to his own country and would infuriate the Jews against himself. Shall we give, or shall we not give? they demanded, yes or no.

But some questions cannot be answered by a simple yes or no, and this was one of them.

Jesus overlooked their demand and quietly called for a Roman penny. "And they brought it," little thinking they were bringing the very witness that was to refute and silence them. "Whose is this image, and superscription?" he innocently asked. "Cæsar's," they could not do otherwise than answer. Then said Jesus, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." "And they marveled greatly at him."

And well might they marvel. Their question was fully and frankly answered. Jesus was free of all offense to either Roman or Jew, and they themselves were caught in their own net.

By the fact of using Cæsar's coin they so far acknowledged Cæsar's government. They accepted the benefits of Roman law and order, protection and safety, Roman roads and Roman rights: was it not just that they should pay for these things?

This was the meaning and purpose of the taxes they paid, and they themselves unwittingly admitted the justice of such tax by the very coins they used.

On the other hand, God had rights which should be fulfilled. Their own souls were stamped with the divine image and bore witness to his right to reign over him. They should then render unto him the faith and service that were his due.

Thus duty to man and duty to God were both recognized and enforced.

These two duties are still binding on us.

The powers that be are ordained of God, however much they may have changed their form. We owe our government tribute and obedience and respect, and we also owe the same duties to God.

These two sets of obligations never conflict, but combine and blend into one spirit and service.

Pharisees and Herodians having been driven from the field, the Sadducees next tried their hand at the business of catching Jesus (verses 18–27). They had a question that was fearfully and wonderfully made, relating to their marriage customs. It was intended to embarrass Jesus on the subject of the resurrection and they thought it would either force him to deny the resurrection as they did, or else drive him into admitting a ridiculous conclusion.

But again Jesus deftly extricated himself from their trap and drove them into confusion and silence. He convicted them of ignorance of their own Scriptures, and they quickly disappeared from the scene.

4. An Important Question

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence they gathered themselves together for another trial. They felt they were losing ground and that something decisive and desperate must be done. A lawyer now stepped forth as their representative with his test question: "What commandment is the first of all?"

This was a favorite point of dispute among these doctors of the law, and the question is one of importance.

There is an order of rank and precedence among commandments, and it is well for us to be able to distinguish universal and permanent principles from local and temporary precepts.

How much of the practical wisdom of life consists in being able to know big things from little things?

Especially is it important in religion to distinguish substance from form, spirit from letter, the grain from the husk. This is just what these learned doctors failed to do, and in their hands this question became an empty and wearisome dispute over Sabbath keeping and washings and phylacteries and fringes.

Scripture study that so misses great principles and seizes upon petty points, religion that degenerates into such miserable disputing, is as offensive to right reason as it is useless in life.

Denominational disputes and theological controversies are too often carried on in this spirit. Scripture should never be made a mere debating ground and fighting arena.

5. A Convincing Answer

The question had been prepared, but the answer was unpremeditated, and it is marvelous in its simplicity, breadth, completeness and conclusiveness. Jesus drew his answer out of the Scriptures (Deut. 6:4–5) and simply quoted the "Shema" (Hebrew for Hear, the first word of the quotation) which every devout Jew recited twice a day.

The fundamental commandment is first love to God and then love to man.

Love is a comprehensive state of soul, gathering up into itself all the affections of the heart, the intelligence of the mind, and the energies

of the will. It is the first commandment, for we must get right with God before we can be right with any one else. This primary love to God immediately expresses itself in love to men, and thus the whole circle of being is flooded and irradiated with this golden light.

If we love God we must love men, too, for men are the children of God and our own brothers.

This was the answer of Jesus to this question as to which commandment is first, and it was so reasonable and right, convincing and conclusive that the lawyer himself accepted it and pronounced it good. How Jesus lifted this commandment out of the small casuistry and senseless quibbles of the Pharisees and scribes into a universal principle and splendid usefulness!

Jesus always looked straight and clear into the heart of a subject and saw things in their right relations and proportions. The great commandment loomed up before his vision as a majestic mountain, while all these Pharisaic polemics lay as dust under his feet.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of other attempts of his enemies to entrap Jesus.
2. In what ways may we still pay insincere compliments to Christ?
3. What are some wrong motives in asking questions?
4. Why should we pay taxes?
5. What is the relation of the Christian life to good citizenship?
6. Do commandments and duties ever conflict?

LESSON IX—MAY 27

The Wicked Husbandmen

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Playing Fair With God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Misuse of National Privilege.

Golden Text: Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the wicked shall perish. Psalm 1:6.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 1.

Lesson Passage: Mark 12:1–12; 13:1–37.

Lesson Text: Mark 12:1–12

1 And he began to speak unto them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.

2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard.

3 And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully.

5 And he sent another; and him they killed: and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6 He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard.

9 What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10 Have ye not read even this scripture: The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner;

11 This was from the Lord, And it is marvellous in our eyes?

12 And they sought to lay hold on him; and they feared the multitude; for they perceived that he spake the parable against them: and they left him, and went away.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Vineyard.

2. The Owner's Rights.

3. Messengers Stoned and Killed.

4. Judgment.

5. The Rejected Cornerstone.

In this parable of the Wicked Husbandmen Jesus was telling the Jews a story that did not have a word of religion in it, was simply presenting

them with a leaf torn from a business transaction, and yet it was a burning judgment on their religious conduct.

Business illustrates religion at every point, the common affairs on earth are copies of things in heaven.

1. The Vineyard

The parable first presents the picture of the vineyard. The owner of the vineyard planted it, furnished it with all necessary appliances, and let it out to husbandmen.

The Jews are the vineyard and the owner is God.

He planted them in the promised land, hedged them in from idolatrous nations, and supplied them with divine institutions. The land and the theocracy were his by every right of ownership, and he simply let them out to successive generations. The Jews were not original owners, but tenants.

This principle applies to us as directly as to the Jews.

From whatever point we view life we see that we are tenants and God is the Great Proprietor. Who created the planet and shaped the continent, planted it with the seed of the Anglo-Saxon race, fashioned its government, built its cities, produced its wealth, and developed its whole civilization? Whatever part our forefathers and ourselves have had in the work, back of and in all these processes is God's presence and providence.

However he may have worked through human agency, he planted this magnificent vineyard of America.

Our civilization has been built up by the toil and suffering of countless generations and we are born into it as our free inheritance.

We have no claim to its absolute ownership and are but temporary occupants.

The same is true in the narrower field of individual life. The home into which we are born is a vineyard planted for us by other hands. The training that has brought us up has been the service and sacrifice of many others. We are environed in institutions, civil, educational and religious, that have been built for us. Our very being with all its faculties and possibilities is a vineyard planted for us.

Other men labored and we are entered into their labors, and "He hath made us and not we ourselves."

2. The Owner's Rights

At the proper season the owner sent the husbandmen a servant that he might receive of the fruit of the vineyard.

A vineyard is not a pleasure ground, but a fruitful field.

Its costly planting looks forward to blossoming vines and purple clusters. Its owner, having put so much into it, has a right to expect something out of it. The Jewish people were planted in Palestine that God might receive from them some worthy fruit. The fruit he expected of them was the knowledge and worship of the one true God, righteousness and brotherhood, justice and mercy, and especially preparation for and reception of the Messiah.

The same principle applies to all our possessions.

They are vines that have in them possibilities of growth and fruitage. They are given to us, not that we may enjoy them in idleness and luxury, not that we may misuse and waste them, but that we may develop them and cause them to blossom and yield worthy fruit for the world and God.

Opportunity measures responsibility.
The more God has given us the more he expects from us.

Our country is a wonderful vine, the central attraction and envy of all the earth, and it should be laden with the fruits of justice and righteousness, brotherhood and peace, service and sacrifice, not only for ourselves but also for all the world. Our property is a vine that should yield the fruit of helpful service.

Every faculty is a branch of the vine of our being that should bear its appropriate fruit.

The mind should blossom into truth and wisdom; the heart into sympathy and sacrifice; the will into deeds of service and love.

All life should yield the fruit of worship and service to God.

The theory that we have a right to use our possessions and powers exclusively for our own profit and pleasure is one of the deadliest heresies

that can insinuate themselves into our hearts. This would blight the vineyard of the world and turn it into a desert of selfishness.

"At the season" the owner sends "a servant" for the fruit.

The season is any time that God needs us, and this is all the time. The servant is any one that has a right to demand and receive service from us.

He may be the minister giving us work to do in the church or asking a contribution for missions; a sick one whom we can serve and cheer, a worthy poor man whom we can help, a perplexed and discouraged soul that we can encourage, a child that we can teach and train.

Always the demand is made of us that we live a worthy life of righteousness and service.

3. Messengers Stoned and Killed

The husbandmen caught the servant and beat him and sent him away empty. The owner in his patience and mercy sent another servant, and him they stoned; he sent another, and him they killed.

The Jews from time to time rebelled against God and refused him the fruit of his vineyard.

The prophets, who were the servants and representatives of God, were frequently rejected and beaten and killed (I Kings 6:31; II Chron. 24-20). At last God, in his extreme patience and great mercy, sent his only Son.

His coming was the supreme opportunity and last chance of the Jews.

Had they received him they would have retained the vineyard and its vines would have overrun the world. But they saw that the spiritual kingdom of Jesus was destructive of the worldly kingdom they wanted. They believed that if he had his way they would lose the vineyard, but if they destroyed him they would be able to keep it. So they fell upon him in fury and put him to death; he was cast pierced and bleeding out of his own vineyard.

Their guilt was great and we shudder as we think of it, rarely realizing that our guilt may be as dark as and even darker than theirs.

They knew not what they did as clearly as we know what we do.

In so far as we refuse or fail to receive Christ and fulfill our duties and opportunities we are unfaithful husbandmen refusing fruit to the owner of life's vineyard.

Many are the ways in which we beat off and wound and kill God's messengers.

Every one that makes a rightful demand upon us for service that we refuse, every conviction of duty and good impulse that is stifled, is a servant of God beaten off or stoned dead.

Rejecting Christ is rejecting the Son, and when Christ lies deliberately slain in a human heart, the last messenger of mercy from God is dead, and there remains only a fearful reckoning.

4. Judgment

"What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others."

History terribly fulfilled this prophecy.

Forty years later the Romans fell upon rebellious fanatical Jerusalem with furious vengeance and literally wiped it off the earth, leaving it a heap of smoking ashes and broken stones. The Jews were scattered over the world and have been homeless wanderers ever since. The vineyard was taken from them and given to others. This was not an arbitrary and senseless judgment, but was just the natural and necessary outworking of their unbelief and wickedness.

When the vineyard of life is not properly cultivated poisonous weeds begin to grow and choke the vines which begin to die.

Opportunities unimproved pass away, perhaps into other hands. Wealth not employed productively wastes away. Knowledge that is not used fades out of the mind. Sympathies not exercised shrivel into selfishness. The heart that will not aspire loses the power of aspiration. The soul that will not see God grows spiritually blind.

We cannot refuse to use our possessions and powers so as to make them fruitful and still keep them.

Every duty not done renders some delicate nerve or tissue of conscience less sensitive and vigorous, destroys some bit of the soul. There is a principle of justice in the world that will not let us be unfaithful to the vines and keep the vineyard. We must get out of the way and give place to others that will bear fruit.

And this applies to nations and to our nation as it does to individuals.

If we hug our matchless possessions and opportunities to ourselves and refuse to share their fruit with the world, if we shut our life up within ourselves and cherish it and turn it into a means of national pride and boastfulness, our doom will be upon us. Our selfishness will make us the hatred of the world, and no nation can ultimately stand against a hostile world.

As a nation we are our brothers' keeper and we must administer our vineyard so that it will not only serve us but also serve all our human kind.

History is a vast graveyard of nations that forgot God and perished, and one way to forget God is to forget his other children.

5. The Rejected Cornerstone

Thus was Jesus rejected. But this rejection was foreshadowed in prophecy and was only a step to higher exaltation. The stone which these Jewish builders rejected became the head of the corner.

The cornerstones in the world's building generally are at first rejected.

Every age stones its own prophets; the next age builds their tombs. Every great reform and forward movement in history starts from some principle that is at first opposed and persecuted. At length it begins to gain headway, and at last it mounts into power. The battle of one generation becomes the victory of the next, and the blood of one the unconscious blessing of the next.

The world's biggest blunders have been its rejection of cornerstones.

Here is the failure of the expert. The architect is supposed to know

a cornerstone when he sees it, but how often have the architects of the world's building rejected stones that finally became the head stone of the corner! Socrates and Isaiah and Paul, Luther and Lincoln, many are they that drank cups of bitter rejection in their day that the world now honors and builds for them the most costly mausoleums.

It takes genius to see a cornerstone: an unpopular leader whom the future will honor, a despised principle that has in it the might of God.

The abolition of slavery was thus ridiculed and hated, prohibition ran the same gantlet, foreign missions were at first opposed, and what good cause has not had its day of discouragement? Not every one can detect a diamond in the rough. Every one can see it after it has been cut and shoots a vivid blaze of light.

The supreme instance of a cornerstone rejected is Jesus Christ.

Cast out crucified and dead by his own people, the Jews, he has become the cornerstone of Christendom. The centuries are building upon him; civilization is more and more shaping itself to and resting upon his principles.

His kingdom is the only thing in the world that cannot be shaken. Whatever would have a solid foundation under it must get on this Rock.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can a vineyard be made to bear fruit?
2. Are science, literature and art also vineyards that should serve the world?
3. What are some of the messengers sent to us for fruit?
4. In what ways do judgments fall on unfaithful stewards?
5. How can we learn to discern true cornerstones?

LESSON X—JUNE 3

Jesus Facing Betrayal and Death

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Loyalty in Times of Testing.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Fellowship of his Sufferings.

Golden Text: Not what I will, but what thou wilt. Mark 14:36.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 22:1–5, 18–19.

Lesson Passage: Mark 14:1–42.

Lesson Text: Mark 14:17–25, 32–36

17 And when it was evening he cometh with the twelve.

18 And as they sat and were eating, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray me, *even* he that eateth with me.

19 They began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I?

20 And he said unto them, *It is* one of the twelve, he that dippeth with me in the dish.

21 For the Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born.

22 And as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body.

23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them: and they all drank of it.

24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

25 Verily I say unto you, I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

32 And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray.

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled.

34 And he saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***A Startling Announcement.***
2. ***A New Ordinance Out of the Old.***
3. ***A Gleam of Prophecy.***
4. ***Gethsemane.***
5. ***A Wonderful Prayer.***

Places become important, and this upper room in Jerusalem where Jesus gathered with his disciples under the shadow of the cross on the evening preceding the crucifixion was the scene of one of the most sacred and precious events in the life of our Lord. He knew what was coming. The cross was no surprise to him and did not cause him to falter a single step.

His ministry was done and he was now ready to be offered.

On Thursday afternoon of Passion Week the preparation for the Passover was made, and on Thursday evening, which according to the Jewish reckoning was the beginning of Friday, the Passover was eaten and the Lord's Supper was instituted.

1. A Startling Announcement

In the evening the little company gathered in the appointed place and the Passover meal began. As they were eating the disciples were startled by the sudden announcement of Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray me, even he that eateth with me."

The unexpected and shocking news filled the disciples with alarm.

Such baseness excited their horror. Could it be possible there was such treachery lurking amongst them? and they began to say, one by one, Is is I?"

The form of their question was good. They did not point the finger of suspicion at one another and say, "Is it you? Is it possible you can be so treacherous and base?" but, "Is it I? Is this baseness lying coiled up in my heart?"

This was true self-examination and was their best safeguard.

Our first impulse often is to think others worse than ourselves, and we impute to them evil that we never suspect may be in our own hearts. But the thought that should first strike us and deeply concern us is, "Is it I?"

There are hidden possibilities of evil in us of which we may be seldom or never conscious.

And there are moments, as when a great crime is committed, or when temptation suddenly assails us, in which we are revealed to ourselves

as by a flash of lightning and get glimpses into the undreamed-of and frightful depths of evil in our hearts that fill us with alarm and horror. Then we know that we in our supposed immaculate virtue and boasted strength are never safe.

"I have never heard," said the pure and dispassionate Emerson, "of any crime which I myself might not have committed."

We need to keep in close acquaintance with our hearts and never assume that we may not fall into the deepest sin.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

The disciples wanted to know the guilty one, but Jesus left the point in uncertainty that all might be warned. Then he uttered a deep mystery of divine providence. "The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born."

Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are here strangely interlinked.

Jesus was "delivered up to die by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and yet man was held accountable for his death. God's plan is wide enough to include our most wicked acts, and yet it leaves our free agency and responsibility untouched.

No man can roll his sin off on God's foreordination. Though it has been "written" in the counsel of eternity, yet it is his own sin, and, continuing impenitent, it were good for him if he had never been born.

2. A New Ordinance Out of the Old

"And as they were eating, he took bread."

The Lord's Supper was not an abrupt creation, but a further evolution.

The new ordinance grew out of the old and was the fulfillment and perfect blossom of the past. Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfill, and Christianity is not a new faith, but the final outgrowth and fruitage of the old faith.

These few simple verses are one of the most deeply significant and sacred passages of Scripture. Here we are on holy ground and our

meditation should be pervaded with tender reverence. The emblems and ordinance are rich in ideas.

The great central idea is sacrifice.

The broken bread represents the broken body, and the poured-out wine the shed blood of Christ. The scarlet thread of sacrifice is woven into the whole web of the universe. The very limestone rock on which the Cross stood was composed of the tiny bones of countless myriads of animals that gave up life that this symbol and means of redemption might stand. The wheat is broken and ground up that it may impart its life to higher life. The mother lays her life on the altar of sacrifice for her child, and the father will lay down much, even life itself, for his wandering boy. These are but drops of sacrifice out of the heart of God.

The supreme instance of sacrifice is the Cross of Calvary, on which the Father offered the Son and the Son freely gave himself.

This is an offering, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that has virtue to atone for the guilt of sin and to cleanse away its vileness.

Another great idea in this ordinance is that of food for the soul.

The bread passes into the blood and is assimilated into tissue and reappears in the strength and beauty of the body. But man cannot live by bread alone. The soul has its hunger and must have bread or die. Christ is the bread of life that cometh down from heaven. He satisfies all our spiritual needs and gives life everlasting. His Spirit passes into our hearts and is assimilated into our spirits and reappears in the strength and fruitfulness and loveliness of our lives.

Another prominent idea in this ordinance is fellowship.

It is "the communion" of the Lord's Supper, communion with him and with one another. "We, being many, are one bread and one body." Here all divisive lines converge and melt into the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

The world over eating bread together is a sign of fellowship, and when we receive this bread we hereby proclaim that we are no more strangers and enemies, but brethren and children in the household of God. The

closer we get to Christ the closer we are to one another, as all the radii of a circle converge and touch as they approach the center. These and many other truths are expressed in this bread and cup.

The outward emblems are simple and unadorned, but the inner meaning is deep and rich.

The significance of any sign is not measured by the nature of the sign itself. The flag of our country is only so much silk or muslin, and yet what a mighty meaning does it carry wherever it floats, representing the law and order, the power and majesty, the history and glory of a great nation. A little lock of hair carefully preserved, a little old shoe well worn at heel and toe, may seem to the careless eye of another to be of slight significance, but to the bereaved mother they suggest thoughts and memories that are too deep for tears.

So this bread and cup may seem common and insignificant to the world, but to the believer they are precious, suggesting thoughts and memories and hopes that the world cannot give or take away.

3. A Gleam of Prophecy

The ordinance also has in it a gleam of prophecy. It looks back upon the past in remembrance, but it also looks out upon the future, "till he come" in that day when Christ will "drink it new with you in the kingdom of God."

It thus links Christ's first with his final coming.

How slender and frail seems the thread and yet how it has lasted and will last. How perishable are the elements and yet how imperishable is the memorial! It is one of the oldest things in the world and will yet outlast all the fabrics human hands have fashioned.

It must have some substance and vitality that cannot die.

It has deep rich roots, but it has not yet come to its perfect blossom and ripe fruit. Full of meaning as is its retrospect, fuller still is its prospect. These symbols are also shadows of things to come which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard. If we could discern the real meaning of this bread and cup, these common elements would shine with the splendor of the celestial banquet house, and as we received them there would float in upon us the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Christianity is a religion of hope. Every time we receive this ordinance we are bidden to cherish the hope of " some sweet day " when our Lord will come and take us home.

4. Gethsemane

After the closing hymn of the Lord's Supper, Jesus and his disciples near the hour of midnight went out of the city across the Kedron to the garden of Gethsemane on the western slope of the Mount of Olives.

This garden was the real battlefield of the Cross. Gethsemane won the victory of Calvary.

The Master went apart to pray. Prayer was his preparation for his Passion. He wanted to see full and clear the light of his Father's face before he stepped into the final darkness.

" And he taketh with him Peter and James and John." The three witnesses of the Transfiguration were also witnesses of the agony of this Garden of Sorrows. They saw Jesus on the mountain top steeped in the splendor of his glory and they saw him down in the valley bowed under bloody sweat.

Why did Jesus, leaving the other eight disciples behind, take these three with him?

Partly as an inner guard against interruption, but mainly for the sympathy and support of their presence.

It was the simple presence of these chosen disciples that Jesus wanted: not their talk.

There was nothing they could say to him that would help him: but their watchful waiting near by would support and strengthen him. The best sympathy is not that which is most talkative and fussy: the silent presence, the sympathetic tear, the thoughtful act, these go deeper.

There are chambers of sorrow in which voluble speech is an annoyance and impertinence.

These friends of Jesus were near to him in his sorrow, but they were also separated from him by a great and impassable gulf.

An exceeding sorrow swept over his soul and bore him close to the shores of death.

We cannot enter into all the elements of this anguish, for it involves roots and relations that outrun our understanding and experience. It was a burden of mystery of which our minds can only touch the edge.

But problems of redemption were being solved and agonies endured which lie infinitely beyond us.

This was the sorrow that forced from the sensitive quivering frame of Jesus great drops of blood. This was the cost of our redemption. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Out of this garden floated one of the most wonderful prayers in the Word of God: out of this darkness and agony came strong and sweet submission. "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." He would have his human desire accepted and fulfilled only in so far as it coincided with the divine will.

This is the grand condition and safeguard of prayer; this bends the most stubborn desire and brings all our petitions within the circle of the will of God.

The victory of the Cross was now won and Jesus calmly said, "Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Tell what you can find out and know about Judas.
2. What is the value of the communion season and ordinance?
3. Can we safely dispense with ordinances?
4. What is the value of hope in our life?
5. What are some Gethsemanes we must enter?

LESSON XI—JUNE 10

The Arrest and Trial

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Trial of Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus Facing His Enemies.

Golden Text: He was despised, and rejected of men. Isaiah 53:3.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:1–6.

Lesson Passage: Mark 14:43–15.

Lesson Text: Mark 15:1–15

1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate.

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering saith unto him, Thou sayest.

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things.

4 And Pilate again asked him, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they accuse thee of.

5 But Jesus no more answered anything; insomuch that Pilate marvelled.

6 Now at the feast he used to release unto them one prisoner, whom they asked of him.

7 And there was one called Barabbas, *lying* bound with them that had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder.

8 And the multitude went up and began to ask him *to do* as he was wont to do unto them.

9 And Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10 For he perceived that for envy the chief priests had delivered him up.

11 But the chief priests stirred up the multitude, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12 And Pilate again answered and said unto them, What then shall I do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.

14 And Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out exceedingly, Crucify him.

15 And Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Council.

2. Pilate.

3. The Silent Jesus.

4. Barabbas.

5. The Sentence.

Of all the celebrated trials recorded in history, this one holds the center of the stage.

The light of intense publicity and world interest beats upon this scene and brings out its complicated play of human passions and especially does it illumine and transfigure its central Figure.

Soon after midnight at the gate of the garden of Gethsemane Judas appeared with the Roman soldiers who arrested Jesus and took him before Annas, an ex-high priest, and then before Caiaphas, the high priest, and the Sanhedrin, who put him through the form of a trial and condemned him. As the Sanhedrin could not lawfully meet at night it met again in the early morning and again condemned Jesus. He was then taken before Pilate, the Roman governor, as the Jews could not execute sentence of death. Pilate endeavored to rid himself of the case by sending it to Herod, the governor of Galilee, who was then in the city, but Herod sent the case back, and Pilate pronounced the sentence which forever affixed to his name the obloquy, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate."

1. The Council

Straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole council held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away and delivered him up to Pilate.

This was after the irregular trial at night. A trial involving capital punishment could be legally conducted only after sunrise, and the phrase "straightway in the morning" shows that they lost no time and were in the greatest possible hurry with their unholy work. Trials are usually conducted with becoming regard to dignity and after such lapse of time as will permit the facts to be gathered and prejudice and passion to cool, but these judges rushed the case through a few hours after the arrest.

When men are bent on an evil end it is hard for them to keep within ordinary bounds of propriety and justice and they will resort to any means to accomplish it.

It is important to note who these accusers and judges of the pure and holy Jesus were. They were not, as might have been expected, Roman unbelievers and scoffers, or Jewish thieves and thugs, the scum of the city or the outlaws of the wilderness, but "the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council." Doctors of divinity and elders, the highest men in the church—these were the heresy hunters who were hailing Jesus to his death.

The wickedest deed that ever was committed against religion was not the work of infidels but of ecclesiastics. Those who were first and highest in privilege and profession may be last and lowest in misdeeds and guilt.

The church itself crucified its own Christ, and this should ever keep it humble.

The hatred of ecclesiastics is something that men have ever feared. Such tyranny has not yet died out of the world and may be lurking in our church and in our hearts.

2. Pilate

The scene of the trial now shifts to Pilate's judgment hall, from Jewish jurisdiction to Roman authority.

Pilate stands in the white light of this trial, as a mote floats into a sunbeam, and there he is revealed in his character and cowardice forever.

The charge on which the priests had condemned Jesus was blasphemy, but they knew that such a charge would not be considered by Pilate, who cared nothing for the religious questions and quarrels of the Jews. So when they brought their prisoner before him they preferred a new charge that had a political color, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king" (Luke 23:2).

This drew from Pilate the question, "Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering saith, Thou sayest."

Would ever any mortal eye have discerned in Jesus at that moment the aspect of a king?

There he stood pale and wan, humbly clad, under charge of sedition and treason, with eminent citizens, ministers of religion and lawyers of the state, his own countrymen, testifying against him. If he claimed to be a king, was he not an impostor or insane?

No one thought him a king that day.

The priests and scribes did not think him a king, but a rebel and traitor against their church and state, a dangerous man to be put out of the way as speedily as possible. The rabble of the city did not

think him a king, but were ready to cry for his blood. Pilate did not think him a king, though he did have some strange thoughts and fears flashing through his mind.

Nobody thought him a king—except himself.

Calmly, confidently he answered Pilate's question with the words, "Thou sayest," equivalent to a strong affirmation. He knew the truth about himself. Amidst all the falsehood and hatred and inverted appearances of that day he never doubted his royal birth and right and destiny, and he felt his hand grasping an invisible sceptre and saw an everlasting throne.

Jesus is King: he said it; we may say it; the whole world is learning to say it; heaven is shouting and singing it.

Let all generations and lands and peoples say it. Let all hearts believe and experience his blessed reign.
Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all.

3. The Silent Jesus

The chief priests now began their accusations against Jesus and multiplied charges and grew furious.

Jesus stood in the midst of all this malice and noise silent.

To Pilate the seeker after truth he would speak, but to these hypocrites and haters of truth he would say nothing.

Silence may be as strong and eloquent as speech.

The musical instrument must not only be able to speak, but equally able to keep silent. The power of the human tongue depends as much on its self-restraint in silence as upon its vocal activity in speech. Man is often silent because he holds his tongue in masterful self-control, so that his silence may be as great a power as his most eloquent utterance.

We have not yet fathomed the depth and power and beauty of the silences of Jesus.

Under temptation and provocation we too easily fume and fret and fly into temper and passion; we cannot keep still but must talk. We need to grow into self-controlled strength that can stand amidst noisy

fury patient and strong and mute as a mountain beaten upon with bitter blasts and angry waves.

Pilate marveled at the silence of Jesus. He expected to see him resent these charges and talk back. He could understand the furious passion of weak men, but not the calm silence of a strong man. This blustering Roman who was used to the yells of mobs was mystified and frightened by silence.

Silence is often unanswerable in its logic and terrifying in its reserve. Answering not a word is sometimes the completest refutation of false charges. We make a mistake when we try to run every false word down.

The best answer may be no answer. Jesus wrapped himself in silence, and no poisoned arrow pierced his soul.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth.

4. Barabbas

Pilate began to see that Jesus was an innocent man against whom the Jews had brought trumped-up charges. His Roman sense of justice revolted against such proceeding, and he looked for some way out of the case.

A happy thought struck him.

It was the custom at the passover season to release a prisoner as an expression of the general good will of the occasion. Lying in prison at the time was Barabbas, a notorious robber, and the fierce light of this trial falls on him. He was an insurrectionist and murderer, one of the fanatical outlaws that lived by plunder and at times broke out into rebellion against Rome, a bold bad man, but popular with the people.

The happy thought of Pilate was that he would suggest to the people that he would release unto them "the King of the Jews." He was willing to flatter them a little with the idea that they had "a king" in order to please them and relieve himself of the troublesome prisoner.

But the chief priests were far too cunning to be caught with such a device.

Quickly they got to work down among the multitude, stirring them up against such a scheme and proposing that "he should release Barabbas unto them."

Pilate then tried to reason with them, saying, "What then shall I do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?"

Pilate had to do something with him, and so must every one of us: there is no escaping this point and responsibility.

Then the priests and the mob sent up the terrifying cry, "Crucify him." Pilate now cried out as if affrighted, "Why, what evil hath he done?" No evil, and Pilate knew it. But this was the weak and cowardly question with which he met the demand to release Barabbas. The priests now saw that they had Pilate in their power, and they cried all the more furiously, "Crucify him!"

This is what comes of putting Jesus Christ to vote: there were more votes for a bold, dashing, bad man than for a quiet, meek, innocent man.

It is a question whether the scales have yet turned. We need only scratch our own Christian skin to find the beast in us, and when it is roused up and gets a taste of blood, as in times of anger or in war, it yells for Barabbas and not for Christ.

5. The Sentence

"And Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." This was the outcome of all his cunning devices and truckling cowardice. One brave, just, decisive word from him would have saved Jesus and would have saved Pilate, but the vacillating Roman governor, once launched on the current of his fears, could not stand before the mob and released the robber and sent Christ to the cross.

"Wishing to content the people;" bending to public opinion instead of standing up for justice and right, conscience and truth: what a prevalent and powerful motive is this among men? How many a cowardly surrender does it explain, how many a fall does it cause, how many a statesman does it degrade into a politician, how many a social sin does it excuse and perpetuate?

Let us dare to resist the multitude when we believe it is wrong.

Give us the brave spirit of the old soldier Joshua who declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Follow not a multitude

to do evil, but be true to your own conscience, and God will be true to you.

So ended the trial of Jesus. Yet the case was not closed when Pilate delivered him to be crucified.

This trial is still open, and every one of us must record his verdict.

Very ancient history may be repeated by those that are little aware of doing this. Those who are outwardly separated in time and circumstances as widely as Pilate and ourselves may inwardly do the same thing. "What shall I do with Jesus?" is still the question we must answer, and no other decision we make goes so deep down into life and so far out into eternity.

Cast your vote on the right side. Be at peace with this holy Man.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why were the priests so anxious to have Jesus sent to his death?
2. Were they conscientiously wrong and if so were they guiltless?
3. Can you give any indications of when we should be silent?
4. Why was Barabbas so popular?
5. What became of Pilate?

LESSON XII—JUNE 17

The Crucifixion

Intermediate and Senior Topics: Why Jesus Chose the Cross.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Meaning of the Cross.

Golden Text: God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:7–12.

Lesson Passage: Mark 15:16–47.

Lesson Text: Mark 15:22–26, 33–39

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23 And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

24 And they crucify him, and part his garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take.

25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah.

36 And one ran, and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to take him down.

37 And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

38 And the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.

39 And when the centurion, who stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Golgotha.***
2. ***The Crucifixion.***
3. ***A Significant Inscription.***
4. ***Unconscious Eulogies.***
5. ***The End.***

We come to Calvary. From Pilate's judgment hall Jesus was led to this place. He was made to bear his own cross, but an African Jew was compelled to share the burden. The disciples had disappeared, but

a little group of women followed, bewailing his fate. Jesus, however, bade them weep not for him, but for themselves. At last the procession reached the place where the great tragedy was enacted.

It was then only a common execution ground, but now it is the loftiest summit in the story of redemption.

Towards this point for centuries the lines of prophecy converged, and from it ever since have issued streams of blessing that are everywhere making the world rejoice.

1. Golgotha

The name of the place was Golgotha in Hebrew, Calvary in Latin. It was outside the north wall of the city on the Damascus road, the site now uncertain, for Christianity is not a religion of places so much as of persons. The name, meaning a skull, was probably given to a small knoll in the shape of a skull and it was a significant name for the place of man's redemption.

How eloquent of death is a skull!

The delicate organs of sight and sound that were so expressive of life and love are utterly gone, leaving only dark caverns staring blankly around; and the great golden bowl of the brain, once the seat of intelligence, and affection and will, is empty forever.

So is man in his sin. It was fitting, then, that the cross should be lifted at Golgotha, the place of a skull, emblem of man's condition, for it was to bear the guilt of sin and undo all its work.

On that cross were to be nailed all the wounds and woes that have reduced man to a skull, and from it were to issue such virtue and power as would restore his shattered faculties and make him once more a living soul.

2. The Crucifixion

The soldiers that led Jesus to the place of crucifixion promptly dispatched the business.

The mode of execution had been shadowed forth for ages under a variety of types and figures.

The brazen serpent signified that he was to be lifted up; the lamb upon the altar showed that he was helpless and dumb; the slaying of the lamb

showed that his blood must be shed. His hands and his feet were to be pierced, he was to be wounded and tormented, his ears were to be filled with revilings, upon his vesture lots were to be cast, and vinegar was to be given him to drink. These numerous and diverse requirements as to the Messiah's death had been foretold in Jewish prophecy.

And now the Gentile world came forward with a mode of execution that marvelously combined them all.

An instrument had been invented by the cruelty of the human heart that was the terror of the ancient world. This was the cross. It was only two beams of wood nailed together at right angles, but it was armed with almost preternatural power of inflicting agony.

The victim was first stripped quite naked and scourged with whips, into which had been woven bits of iron, until his flesh was all lacerated and bleeding. He was then laid upon the cross and his arms stretched out upon the crossbeam, and large iron spikes were ruthlessly driven through hands and feet into the solid wood behind. The cross, bearing its victim, was then raised upright and dropped into a hole dug for it with a violent jolt. Hanging on four great wounds, naked under a blazing sun, torn and bleeding, with wounds inflaming, thirst raging, every nerve quivering with pain, the sufferer endured the agony for one, two, or even three days before death mercifully put an end to the scene. And through it all soldiers and the rabble mocked and jeered the unhappy creature, even spitting upon him and brutally striking him as they passed by.

This is what they did when " they crucified him."

There by the holy city at the place of a skull, surrounded by enemies, cruelly tormented, with only a few women and a single disciple looking on from a distance in silent sympathy, Jesus hung upon the cross. All the horror of this death burst upon him in flames of agony so terrible that in a few hours his life was consumed.

Yet no spot of guilt was upon him, no secret fault was in him, but he was wounded for our transgressions and for our iniquities he was bruised.

The soldiers in charge of the crucifixion received the garments of Jesus as their perquisites. Wholly unconscious that they were fulfilling

ancient Jewish prophecy (Ps. 22:18), they divided the outer garments into four parts, one for each soldier; and then, rattling dice in their brass helmets, they gambled for the inner garment which was woven without seam.

Thus unwittingly do men even in their deepest wickedness fulfill far-off divine purposes.

How little did these soldiers realize the overshadowing significance of that death while they were busy getting a few shreds of this world's goods?

Their eyes glittered with avarice as they watched the fall of the dice, but they were blind to the innocence and meekness and self-sacrifice of the Man on the cross. Their tongues were noisy with bargaining and blasphemy, but they had no words of sympathy and praise for the strange Sufferer.

Is it not even so among us to this day?

In all our cities and towns in the very thick of their crowded streets and marts, churches and cathedrals lift their spires to heaven often crowned with a cross. Within sight of this symbol of the crucified Christ men buy and sell and speculate and gamble and follow with the fiercest competition the pursuit of the goods of earth.

How often do they lift their eyes to that symbol and temper their bargaining and restrain their blaspheming with thoughts of that holy Man? How much of our living is but noisy worldliness and selfishness in the presence of Christ?

Let the shadow of that cross ever fall upon our lives to quiet and constrain them into holy purpose and high endeavor.

3. A Significant Inscription

On the top of the cross over the head of Jesus was a board whitened with gypsum, bearing in black letters the inscription, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Pilate wrote the inscription, doubtless as a deadly insult to the Jews, and when they saw it they were enraged and interceded with him to have it changed.

But the Roman governor, having recovered some of his courage, met them with the refusal, "What I have written, I have written." He

may have had some dim consciousness of the moral greatness, if not of the supernatural nature of Jesus, and thus wrote. More likely, however, it was written as a jest and insult.

Yet, like many another word spoken in ridicule, it has turned out to be one of the greatest truths of the world.

It was written in three languages: the official Latin, the current Greek and the vernacular Aramaic—a fact which may explain the variations in the form of the inscription in the three gospels.

The writing of the inscription in these languages is a significant fact. Every one present could understand one of these tongues.

The gospel is for all men of every tongue and race and nation, and it must be put into all languages that all may hear it and none may miss its meaning. Already it has been translated in whole or in part into about eight hundred languages and so almost every people and tribe can read it in their own speech.

The Latin was representative of power in the ancient world, the Greek of culture, and the Aramaic of the common people.

Christ is King over all: he is mighty to rule over the strong; he has truth for the intellectual; and his sympathies are broad as humanity, and the common people hear him gladly.

Two thieves were crucified with him, one on each side. This may have been intended as a further degradation of Jesus, but it only raised him to a higher exaltation. The thieves also joined in the blasphemy and railed at Jesus. But one of them repented and was saved and passed that day with Jesus into Paradise.

One repented, and, therefore, there is hope of repentance in the dying hour.

But only one repented, and, therefore, let none presume to run the risk.

4. Unconscious Eulogies

A furious mob raged like an angry sea around the cross. There were preachers and elders of the church, Sadducees in their silken robes, Roman soldiers in their scarlet cloaks, coarse people drawn by low curiosity, and the basest dregs from the slums of the city. These kept

up a constant tumult of jeers and taunts and insults and violence against Jesus. A few of these taunts were caught up into the inspired gospels and have been wafted down to us.

Like everything that was said in derision against Jesus, they add to his honor and are so many crowns on his head.

One of the most striking and significant of these was: "He saved others; himself he cannot save" (Matt. 27:42). No grander eulogy could be pronounced even upon the Son of God. Unconsciously they placed upon his brow his brightest crown.

Thank God that Jesus could not save himself. Saving self is the curse of this world: saving others is its salvation.

5. The End

Nature manifested mysterious sympathy with the scene. The sun hid its glories from the awful spectacle, and the earth quaked as though convulsed with mortal agony.

The outer darkness, however, was but a shadow of the deeper darkness that was gathering around the soul of Jesus.

We cannot penetrate into the profound mystery of that moment when the Father's face seemed averted and the Son uttered the infinitely pathetic cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In that hour burdens were being borne, problems were being solved, sacrifice was being rendered that run far beyond the borders of our experience and conception.

This gives us a faint hint of the cost of redemption.

This saying of Jesus was misinterpreted by those that heard it, as so many of his sayings were.

He was misunderstood of men up to the very last, as he so often is to this day.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon and life was about spent. Human nerves could endure the strain no longer. The last thread was about to snap. With a great cry of mortal agony he commended his spirit to his Father, his head fell forward and all was still. He was dead. With wicked hands they had crucified him.

Was this only one more death among the innumerable deaths of earth?

No, this Death is the Fountain of Life.

From it flow streams of mercy and healing and power to save the world. It is the fullest revelation and proof of the great truths of the gospel. In the presence of this Cross only can we know God: how absolute is his justice and how infinite is his love. In the presence of this Cross only can we know man: how deep is his sin and how high is his worth. Only in its light can we read the full meaning of sin and death and obedience and holiness.

The justice of God, the love of Christ, the worth of man, the sinfulness of earth and the holiness of heaven, all these were gloriously manifested when on that green hill far away the dear Lord was crucified.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is it well that we do not know the exact place of the crucifixion?
2. How deeply is the principle of sacrifice built into the world?
3. In what sense must we bear a cross?
4. What other unconscious eulogies of Jesus were uttered at the cross?
5. What is the atonement?

LESSON XIII—JUNE 24

REVIEW

Jesus the Saviour

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus Our Lord and Saviour.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Son of God with Power.

Golden Text: Choose you this day whom ye will serve. Joshua 24:15.

Devotional Reading: Zephaniah 3:14–17.

We have followed the footsteps of Jesus during the closing days of his ministry and seen him in some of the outstanding events of his life on earth. We may gather the lessons together in a summary view.

1. Jesus the Suffering Messiah

Jesus with his disciples withdrew into retirement in the north that he might have a close interview with them and bind them to himself as he started towards the cross. He proposed to them a great question as to what men were saying about him, and this is still the greatest question of our day. He then narrowed the question down to the personal point of what they thought of him, and this is the point that we should face and answer.

Peter gave a great answer that matched the question, and no other answer than that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, will solve the problem of his personality and power.

Jesus then threw across the path of the disciples the shadow of his cross, and this led Peter into a bad blunder in telling him that this should never happen. Peter received a severe rebuke that he richly deserved.

But Jesus is not the only one who must bear a cross, and he enforced this lesson upon his disciples and upon us.

2. The Resurrection

The first Easter morning brought tremendous excitement to the disciples as they were utterly bewildered by the crucifixion and were

expecting no such event. Women came in the early light with spices to anoint the body of Jesus, showing their state of mind, and they heard the first Easter message and saw the empty tomb. "Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who hath been crucified; he is risen; he is not here."

That message has in it power to crown Jesus with divinity and to scatter the darkness of death and give us a certain hope of a glorious immortality.

The resurrection morning was completed and crowned with the ascension day scene when Jesus rose out of sight and was carried up into heaven. The story would be difficult to invent and is yet simply and sublimely told with art surpassing art.

We feel the writer had no other purpose than just to tell what he had seen.

3. Transfiguration and Service

The Transfiguration is one of the mountain scenes in the Bible and outtops all others except Calvary.

It was momentary outer revelation of the hidden inner glory of Jesus when his divinity was unloosed and shone through his flesh.

Two heavenly visitors appeared and conversed with Jesus about his decease which he was soon to accomplish, and what greater subject could have engaged their attention? If the heavenly inhabitants are so interested in the redemption of the world, God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. So enraptured were the disciples that impulsive Peter spoke up and proposed that they build tabernacles and abide there, but this was a mistaken desire. Too much of a good thing becomes excess that overdoes itself and begins to work harm.

Even spiritual life cannot be maintained on a mountain top of ecstacy.

A cloud swept over the scene, symbolizing the concealed mysteries of God, and out of it came a voice, declaring the divine will. God is always combining concealment with revealment.

The vision vanished, and Jesus with his chosen disciples descended to the plain where work was waiting for them, as it ever is for us.

4. Jesus and the Home

The home is the center and core of our human society, and Christianity apprises it at its vital worth and seeks to maintain it in its integrity and purity. Divorce is one of its enemies and this evil is growing and has become notorious in our own country where the ratio of divorces to marriages is the highest in the world and is still mounting higher. Jesus tightened the marriage bond and left only one or two causes for unloosing it.

Love is the only knot that will bind this tie so that it will hold, and in order that it may ever grow deeper and richer both husband and wife must cherish it.

The scene in which Jesus received little children is one of the most beautiful and charming in the gospels. Children are our most precious possession and privilege, joy and hope, and Christianity ever sets the child in the midst and makes all things work for its protection and development.

Jesus used the child as an illustration of the spirit that constitutes the kingdom of God, and this spirit of innocence and humility and teachability and trust is ever our greatest need and treasure.

5. The Cost of Discipleship

The story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus in such a fine spirit of inquiry is full of instruction. He had so many good things that he was exceedingly attractive and appeared as though he had about all the good to be had in the world.

Yet he was not himself satisfied and came crying out for something more and better, even eternal life.

He lacked only one thing, but that thing being central and vital left a gap in his life that nothing else could supply and in fact vitiated his whole character. His trouble was that all his possessions and fine charms were rooted in selfishness, and until this poisonous core was cut out of

his heart nothing in his life could be right. Jesus imposed upon him a hard requirement, to sell all and give to the poor, and he would not submit to this condition and went away sorrowful and we hear of him no more.

There are many such young people in the world to-day.

Jesus on a later occasion gave some further instruction on the use of wealth in which he showed that in apportioning our contributions to the Lord's treasury we are to consider how much we have left, or what proportion our gifts bear to our total possessions.

This rule makes many of our contributions look pitifully small.

6. Greatness Through Service

In the lesson on Greatness through Service we see how mistaken may be our personal ambitions, and in our very prayers we may be making requests that would bring us to ruin. James and John were ambitious to sit on thrones with Jesus, but crowns cannot be given in this way in the spiritual world, but must be wrought upon the character through service.

They are secreted out of our souls as the iridescent shell out of the shellfish and largely through suffering as the pearl is the product of the suffering of the shellfish.

The other disciples were indignant at the two trying to steal a march on them because they wanted the same thing.

There are always other people in our way and we are apt to grow sore at them for having what we want.

Jesus showed that the way to get up is to go down.

Humble service leads up the steps of deeds done to great things.

7. Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Palm Sunday is always a joyful day with us as it reflects and echoes some of the joy that was so exuberant on this occasion when Jesus rode into Jerusalem with his disciples carpeting the road with their many-colored garments and sending their hosannas far out over the hills. The scene was set in a grand framework of spring landscape and sky, and yet the King rode upon a borrowed colt, for the Lord ever needs the humblest as well as the greatest things.

Their enthusiasm rose to the boiling point and was highly contagious, and enthusiasm is a good thing in our religious life and we should not let it evaporate and leave cold indifference.

Yet criticism was not wanting on this occasion, and it never is, for however successful and glad may be any work and hour, yet some people will not be suited and find fault.

Business had invaded the temple and Jesus came upon a shocking scene, and we need to be careful that we do not bring into our worship such worldly thoughts and affairs as will show where our real interests are.

8. Jesus Teaching in the Temple

Enemies are usually sly and tricky people, and these enemies of Jesus were masters of this evil art. They were engaged in devising questions and traps to catch him, but he was too much for them and turned their devices against them and caught them in their own traps.

Insincere compliments are a frequent resort of such people, and on this occasion these Pharisees and Herodians came to Jesus with a superb compliment which was truer than they intended or knew.

They then proposed their question which they thought would inescapably impale him on one or the other horn, but he frankly answered it in such a way as completely floored them and reduced them to silence. A lawyer then came forward for another try at Jesus with a question about the first of all the commandments and received a convincing answer.

Questions are one efficient way of gaining knowledge, but everything depends on the purpose for which and the spirit in which they are asked.

9. The Wicked Husbandmen

Parables are pictures of truth and Jesus was a master of this art. The vineyard in this parable is the world in which we have been placed, and it includes all our possessions and powers and privileges.

God made it and we are his tenants.

He has right to some return from it. But men find ways of resisting his demands and even of killing off the messengers that are sent to receive its fruit. The Jews did this bloody thing in a literal way, and we can find ways less violent but not less effective of defrauding God of his rights.

Judgment fell upon the tenants of the Jewish vineyard, and the American vineyard shall not escape the same retribution if it is unfaithful to the Great Proprietor.

Jesus was rejected because the experts did not have the genius to see that he was the Cornerstone.

Shall we be equally blind?

10. Jesus Facing Betrayal and Death

The upper chamber in Jerusalem was an obscure and is now an utterly unknown place, but an event occurred there of supreme importance.

Ideas must have symbols, affection must express itself in forms, and the Lord's Supper is a simple ordinance of the deepest and richest spiritual import.

The new ordinance grew out of the old, and Christianity is ever evolving out of old forms into new life and fresh fruitage.

The bread and cup suggest great ideas that are pulsing everywhere in the Christian life of the world to-day.

From the chamber in Jerusalem Jesus and his disciples passed out into the night and on into the darker shadows of Gethsemane where he bore the agony of the coming cross and won its victory.

We must win our battles before we come to them.

11. The Arrest and Trial

The trial of Jesus was a prolonged and complicated process, but its end was determined before it began.

A central figure in the dramatic tragedy was Pilate, Roman politician and coward, who affixed to his name by his course the dark stigma, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Barabbas, the robber, was another figure that floated into the light of this trial, as a mote into a sunbeam, and there stands revealed.

When the matter was submitted to the mob Barabbas got more votes than Christ.

It is a question whether he would not get more votes to-day.

Amidst all the fury and falsity of the scene Jesus stood silent. He would not answer enemies when no answer he could make would swerve them from their prejudice and passion and deadly hatred.

There are times when silence is a good man's strongest defense. Do not try to run every false word down.

The desired and predestined sentence of conviction was finally passed, Pilate "wishing to content the people."

This trial is still on and let us face the issue and cast our vote on the right side.

12. The Crucifixion

All the ancient roads of prophecy and preparation ran to Calvary and now from it run paths of peace and blessing to every quarter of the world.

Golgotha, the place of a skull, was a strikingly significant place for such an enactment, for there was wrought healing for the sin that has reduced man to the condition of a skull.

The crucifixion was a dreadful scene, but sin is dreadful and we do not fear the surgeon's bloody knife when it brings healing and health.

The inscription over the cross was eloquent of truth in three languages, and these three have now been multiplied into eight hundred so that the people of every race and tribe can hear the good news in their own speech.

Unconscious eulogies flew around the cross in which men spoke better than they knew. Finally the death agony snapped the last thread of life and Jesus hung still and limp.

Only in the presence of this Cross can we know God and man, sin and salvation, heaven and hell, and here the love of God was

gloriously manifested when on this green hill far away the dear Lord was crucified.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give a brief outline of each lesson.
2. What lessons specially illustrate Jesus as our Lord and Saviour?
3. What lessons specially illustrate the power of Jesus as the Son of God?
4. To what extent is the life of Jesus reproducible in our life?

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD QUARTER

The first two Quarters of the year are devoted to an outline of the life of Jesus, and the last two to the life and letters of Paul.

Biography is history teaching by example, and the Bible follows this method very largely through its whole history.

Jesus stands out as the supreme Person and Example in the Gospels, and in the Acts Paul is the central figure.

The Acts of the Apostles is one of the most picturesque and dramatic as it is one of the most important books in the Bible.

Its critical value is very great as it is one of the earliest documents of Christianity and shows us the course and fate of the gospel, its inherent power and persistence and expansion, after it was deprived of the personal presence of Christ and was left to make its own way in the world.

It is also an account of the most critical and fateful period of Christianity when it faced the tremendous question of its relation to Judaism and was forced to determine whether it was to remain a Jewish sect or become a universal faith and world religion.

The whole future of our Christian faith was then perilously trembling in the balance.

Luke gives us a vivid picture of this period and shows us Christianity unloosing its swaddling clothes and freeing itself from Jewish constriction and strangulation and standing on its own feet and setting forth on its world march.

It is a magnificent spectacle we witness in these graphic pages and never can they lose their supreme interest for Christian students.

"Had it not come down to us," says Dean Farrar, "there would have been a blank in our knowledge which scarcely anything could have filled up. The origin of Christianity would have been an insoluble enigma." "It is the best," says Dr. Philip Schaff, "as well as the first manual of church history."

We set out again to study the high lights and strategic points in this story, and however often we have gone over them before they will shine out with new light as we fix our attention and insight upon them.

May we so study them as to reproduce their experience in our own hearts and lives.

THIRD QUARTER

LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL

(First Half of a Six Months' Course)

Aim: To discover through the life and writings of Paul (1) the elements of that growing inner experience of God in Christ which made him the outstanding missionary and teacher in the early church; (2) practical applications of Christianity to everyday life and conduct; (3) ways in which the rule of Christ is to be established among men.

LESSON I—JULY 1

The Early Life of Saul

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Saul's Training for Service.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Influences Shaping Saul's Early Life.

Golden Text: Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:33–40.

Lesson Passage: Deut. 6:4–9; Phil. 3:4–6; Acts 22:3, 27–28.

Lesson Text: Deut. 6:4–9; Phil. 3:4–6; Acts 22:3, 27–28

4 Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah:

5 And thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart;

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

4 Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 As touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.

3 I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day.

27 And the chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship. And Paul said, But I am a *Roman* born.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. Get Right with God.
2. Laws Written on the Heart.
3. And Covering the Whole Life.
4. A Hebrew of the Hebrews.
5. A Roman Citizen.

Paul is the most strongly marked character in the Bible.

He was unique in his angular individuality and in the mixture in his nature of incongruous elements and discordant moods, and was intense and uncompromising in his principles and convictions.

Many-sided, variously-gifted, deeply religious, terribly conscientious, tremendously in earnest in his convictions and volcanic in his emotions, by turns cool and calm or hot and passionate, at one time proudly boastful and at another time in the depths of self-humiliation, adventurous and masterful as a pioneer preacher and missionary, a Hebrew university graduate and lawyer who was also a Roman citizen and bred in Greek culture, a great traveler, an eloquent orator, a keen thinker and forceful writer who could sound the depths of philosophy, or let loose his thoughts on the wings of imagination, he was one of the great men of his age and of all ages and has helped to shape all the Christian centuries.

In the lessons of the next six months we shall have the privilege of studying this many-sided and masterful man that we may discover some of the springs and secrets of his life and absorb some of his spirit.

Our lesson begins with a passage from Moses as one of the roots of Paul's life. Every one has deep hereditary roots, and Paul's ran back through a thousand years of Hebrew history.

1. Get Right with God

Law was a great word with Paul; he thought in its terms and applied it to all his teaching and life.

The law of Jehovah is summed up in two great principles in this passage.

The first is the sovereignty of God. "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." The law begins with God and every system of doctrine and life must begin with him.

If we are wrong in our thoughts of God we shall be wrong in our thoughts of everything else.

The center determines every point on the circumference, and what we think about God will determine what we think around the whole horizon of life.

That the Lord our God is one Lord is a fundamental truth in all religion, morals, science, philosophy and life.

There is not room in the universe for two Gods, and only one can sit upon the throne and forever reign.

The other great principle of the law is our relation and duty to God: to love him with all our powers. God is himself love in his nature and in all his thoughts and ways, and therefore he is worthy of our love, and he craves it and seeks to call it forth.

This is the deepest bond of affinity that should bind us to God and it will bring us the richest blessings.

2. Laws Written on the Heart.

Moses next shows how these laws are to be kept.

They are first to be written on the heart.

They are written on the heart by committing them to memory so that they become familiar rules ever present consciously or unconsciously in the mind to regulate our life.

Deeper still they are written on the heart by being wrought in the settled disposition of the soul and into the habits of life through obedience. The heart beats automatically. We do not have to think about its beating to keep it at work, but it runs on and regulates itself.

So is it with these laws of life when they become disposition and habit. Conduct reacts upon belief and drives it deeper into the heart and fixes it in our permanent preferences.

When this process is complete the soul lives the laws of life with unconscious ease and perfection, as the sun shines and the bird sings.

3. And Covering the Whole Life

Having got these laws in the heart, the next step is to get them into the home and out into all life.

The home is a larger heart, and they should both pulse with the same spirit.

These laws of life are no sooner received than they are to be given, and they are first to be given to our children. Parents have a right to impart to and instill into their children their principles of creed and conduct, and to them is given the immense and far-reaching responsibility of molding human nature when it is fresh and plastic.

From the home these laws are to be widened out over all life.

"Thou shalt talk with them when thou sittest down in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Here is religion which covers the whole day from morning to night and through the night, which includes every act and attitude of man, which flows into and fills the mold of daily position and continual progress.

The Word of God can accommodate itself to every season and to all the circumstances of life.

It can be spoken in walking; it can adapt itself to suit the position of one sitting in his house in the very center of the family; when a man lies down religion will speak in terms of restfulness; and it is so energetic that when a man rises up a whole man, reinvigorated in every faculty, it can leap forth into every expression of energy and outrun every effort of the will.

All this was strikingly illustrated in the life of Paul who was of energy all compact and whether he ate or drank or whatsoever he was doing he was glorifying God.

4. A Hebrew of the Hebrews

We next have a bit of Paul's autobiography, a leaf torn out of his own life. In writing to his Philippian converts and friends he speaks of believers as those "who glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

This leads him to touch on the matter of boasting of one's birth and breed and orthodoxy and he makes bold to say that when it comes to such boasting he has something to boast of himself.

In compressed and graphic words he recites a catalogue of his claims so that he can outboast anybody in this line: "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless.

Who can beat or equal that record?

Who has purer blood or a prouder ancestral lineage? Let any one speak up and show his family credentials.

Yet Paul cast all these into the scrapheap of forgotten things in the interest of his devotion to Christ.

"Yea, verily, and I count all to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

This ancestral inheritance was good in its place and Paul stood up for it when this was the duty of the hour (II Cor. 11:22; Rom. 11:1); but when it came into any kind of competition with Christ he cast it away as so much refuse.

It paled in the presence of this superior light as the stars before the rising sun.

How much some people prize their birth and breed and what pride they take in their ancestral lineage, especially when they do not go too far back where they would run into common folk if not disgraceful records? Families will rummage amongst the genealogical records of Europe and pay large sums of money to find some distant and faint connection with nobility and get some family coat of arms which may have been invented and foisted upon them and which they boastfully display. If they knew all or even a little more about some of these ancestors they would hide and deny all connection with them.

We all have come from the same distant ancestors and the common blood of the race is flowing through all our veins.

Some appreciation of and pride in our family origins and connections are proper in their place; we ought to prize and guard good ancestry and an honored family name. Yet few things are more vain and ridicu-

lous than boasting of these things and turning them into a ground of superiority and haughtiness.

Tear the superficial mask off some of these foreign titles and they turn out to be tinsel and sounding brass. Some titles are bought in the market, and some daughters of American millionaires are sold to foreign titled fortune hunters who may be scapegraces, and such marriages often end in tragedy and divorce.

There is a name that is above every name that we may acquire and a title we may wear, the name of Christ and the title to a Christian crown.

In the presence of Christ all these superficial distinctions of blood and family and noble lineage should fade into the glory of his name and service.

In Christ Jesus we are all one, whether common folk or of royal birth, and in this fellowship we are all brethren.

5. A Roman Citizen

We turn back into the Acts, which may be viewed as the Life and Letters of Paul, and we have another bit of his autobiography. He is now up in Jerusalem on his last visit to that city and had been seized by a mob in the temple area, who would have made a quick end of him had it not been for the interference and rescue of the Roman police. He was being led up the stairway into the Roman captain's office when he turned and addressed the crowd below.

Again he emphasized the fact that he was a Jew, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a great teacher and authority in the Jewish church, "instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye are this day."

Here he stood upon his Jewish ancestry and orthodoxy which now was a good defense and served him well.

As he went on with his speech, however, giving an account of his conversion and then mentioning the "Gentiles," this fatal word set the mob wild again and they cried out, "Away with this fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."

The Roman captain now commanded that Paul be brought into the castle and an interesting bit of conversation took place between the

Jew and the Roman with reference to Roman citizenship. When Paul said he was a citizen, standing on his rights so that he might not be beaten, the captain said, "With a great sum obtained I this citizenship." And Paul answered, "But I am a Roman born."

Roman citizenship could be bought and sometimes enormous sums were paid for it.

Our citizenship has been bought with a price.

Liberty has cost life down through the centuries, and the liberty we enjoy to-day is red with the blood of generations.

Citizenship in heaven cost the blood of the Son of God and we are bought with a great price.

The first Christians that obtained this liberty paid for it with a great sum of sacrifice and suffering.

Paul, however, was Roman born: what had cost others much suffering had cost him nothing. This is true of our liberty from some points of view. Our whole vast civilization has come down to us as our free inheritance.

Other men labored and we are entered into their labors.

The kingdom of eternal life, which Christ purchased for us with his blood, is thrown open to us without money and without price. Citizenship in any kingdom of science and art costs study and toil, and the kingdom of heaven must be taken by violence, by earnest effort and sacrifice.

We are born Americans, but not Christians; we enter this citizenship through the new birth.

If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Where was Paul born and what was his education?
2. How can we cherish family pride without vanity?
3. How can we write the law of the Lord in our hearts?
4. What have we to appreciate and be proud of in our American citizenship? In what ways should we not boast of it?
5. What is citizenship in heaven?

LESSON II—JULY 8

Saul and Stephen

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Is Conscience a Safe Guide?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Stephen's Influence on Saul.

Golden Text. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. Rev. 2:10.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 116:12–19.

Lesson Passage: Acts 7:54–8:3; 22:3–4, 19–20; 26:4–5, 9–11.

Lesson Text: Acts 7:54–60; 8:1-3; 22:19-20

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord;

58 And they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *the Lord*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him.

3 But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison.

19 And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *The Preaching of Stephen.*
2. *Stephen's Defense.*
3. *Seeing the Invisible.*
4. *Stephen the First Martyr.*
5. *Saul the Persecutor.*

Paul first appears upon the scene under the name of Saul, the Hebrew form of Paul, amidst the lurid light and mob madness of the first martyrdom of a Christian.

Stephen wears this blood-red crown.

Nothing more is known of him than appears in this narrative. He had been elected as a deacon, but he shot far beyond this office into power and fame as a preacher and inaugurated a momentous revolution in the history of Christianity.

Pauline doctrine and Paul himself have their spiritual ancestry in Stephen.

In personal character he is described as being "full of faith and power." He was a sympathetic and winsome man whose piety was the beauty of holiness. Such men are sometimes weak, without offense but also without force. But Stephen was also a man of power.

He combined amiability with strength, beneath his gracious nature lay stout bones, and iron burned in his blood.

Such a man needed looking after by the opponents of the new faith, and they were not slow to rise against him.

1. The Preaching of Stephen

We are not told what doctrine Stephen preached, but we may gather it from the charges brought against him. Perjured witnesses were suborned, and while their accusations were false in spirit, yet they were true in substance, for Stephen did not deny them and his own defense bore them out.

He was charged with blasphemy in speaking against "the customs which Moses delivered unto us," which seemed to these opponents destructive and sacrilegious. He did speak "against this holy place and the law," though not in the sense and in the spirit they imputed unto him.

Jesus taught this very thing when he swept the temple and the customs of Moses off that mountain top forever.

To an orthodox Jew no more radically iconoclastic and terribly destructive blasphemy could have been uttered.

Stephen was thus the first Christian preacher to grasp and boldly proclaim the truth that the old dispensation of Moses must disappear before the new.

He began to shake the Christian church loose from the narrowness and bondage of Moses, which was necessary and good in its day, and let it out into the glorious liberty of Christ. This process cost the church a long conflict in which Paul became the magnificent champion of liberty, but it was Stephen's inspired genius that first saw this epochal truth and his bravery began the battle.

We see, then, why the Jews were so furiously incensed against Stephen's doctrine: they believed their religious life was at stake.

Moses, who has been the innocent cause of so many ecclesiastical controversies, was being attacked.

Yet the customs of Moses were not being destroyed in the sense the Jews supposed and feared, but were being fulfilled. They were simply blossoming out and ripening into their own proper fruitage and glory while only their husks were falling away.

2. Stephen's Defense

As the charges were made against Stephen, the members of the council fastened their eyes on him and saw an unexpected and wonderful sight. His face grew transfigured before them and became as it had been the face of an angel. Stephen seems to have discerned that his hour had come and that his blood would be the first to baptize the church. Some great thought or passion kindled his soul and lit it up with heavenly radiance.

The man was so nearly pure spirit that his flesh was the thinnest possible veil that could scarcely contain and conceal the burning inner glory.

With his soul thus aflame Stephen began his defense. His long address is one of the most notable speeches in the Bible and repays careful study and analysis.

The drift of his argument is proof from Scripture that God did not always confine himself to the holy land and sacred places but went outside of these in revealing himself.

This met the point of the Jews that "this holy place" was the only sacred place where God could reveal himself.

The address is broken off before the argument was completed, but its logic and conclusion are clear. His whole handling of the history makes it plain that Stephen was not hostile to Moses and was a loyal Jew. But he shows that God had not restricted his grace to any one "place" and "custom," but had revealed himself in many places and customs and through many prophets.

This is a timeless principle and one that we need to keep in mind in our day.

Not only in our place and church and creed has God revealed himself, but also in other places and ways and he seeks to be worshiped everywhere in spirit and in truth.

3. Seeing the Invisible

A dreadful scene ensued. Stephen's judges, sawn through the heart, gnashed on him with their teeth, like snapping mad animals that would bite and tear him to pieces. But Stephen, the man of pure spirit, was so close to heaven that he could look right into it, and he "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Heaven is not far off, but it comes down close around the spiritual soul, and only the thinnest veil separates the pure in heart from its glory.

We are ever nearest to the world we are most like.

Stephen gave utterance to his rapturous vision, declaring that he saw the Son of man before the very men who had crucified him. How blind were their eyes compared with the illumination of his vision!

Every one sees what he has affinity with and the capacity of seeing, so that one may be blind where another sees glory.

The astronomer looks upon the same sun and stars that we see, but how much deeper and more amazing is his vision than ours? The physicist handles the same matter that we do, but he sees molecules and atoms and electrons where we see only gross mass and bulk. The musician hears music in the chamber of his heart that never sounds its chords and melodies in our souls, and the artist sees glories in the sunset that are hid from our eyes. A sculptor looks upon a block of marble and sees an angel, and we see only stone.

The universe is constantly revealing deeper depths and grander glories as men's own vision becomes more sensitive, and it closes all its doors to those who have no inner sense with which to see.

Spiritual blindness is our greatest fatality, shutting us off from infinite glories of which we can never dream, and spiritual vision is our greatest need and blessing, enabling us to see the wonders of the invisible. Elisha's brief but comprehensive prayer for his young assistant was, "Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (II Kings 6:17). Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible."

It would have gone hard with Stephen in his hour of trial but for the invisible.

It was seeing the invisible that sustained all the martyrs and all the great and heroic souls of history.

The invisible is ever the power that lies behind and sustains the visible.

This is true even of the material framework of the heavens: how much more is it true of the world of mind and conscience and character and destiny and God.

Only as we penetrate into this invisible world does the visible world and the whole majestic system of things become rational and a ground of faith and hope.

We also shall be strong and courageous as we see the invisible and live and move and have our being in God.

4. Stephen the First Martyr

This rapturous speech of Stephen was too much for his judges, and, stopping their ears that they might not hear the hateful words, with shouts of rage they rushed upon him and, in violation of Roman law, hurried him through the gate of the city to the place of stoning.

Here they stripped themselves in preparation for their bloody business. The murderous stones now flew hurtling through the air and Stephen was quickly struck down.

The spirit of the Master shone out in the martyr in wonderful power and beauty.

The two expiring cries of Stephen are almost literal echoes from the Cross. First he commended his spirit to the Lord Jesus. He had served him in life, now he trusted him in death, and he could look for no higher reward and glory than to go to him and forever be with him.

Every soul shall go to its own place, whither its spiritual affinity draws it, and heaven is eternal kinship and companionship with the spirits of just men made perfect and with Jesus.

But the martyr, like his Master, could not leave the world without praying for the very enemies that were guiltily sending him out of the world. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

How the breadth and splendor of this charity reveal and rebuke the narrowness and meanness and malice of the enmity and grudges and spite that we so often cherish toward one another!

"And when he had said this he fell asleep." Here was born this early Christian name for death, that was caught up from the tombstones of the early Christians and is still embalmed for us in our word cemetery, "a sleeping place."

This inspired word has transfigured death and made it beautiful.

Sleep is rest and reinvigoration, and there shall be a glorious dawn when the night of death blossoms out into eternal morning.

Thus holy Stephen went to his death, the church received its first baptism of blood, and the truth of the gospel henceforth bore the red seal of martyrdom.

This blood helped to purchase our liberty and has become our blessing.

5. Saul the Persecutor

At this point in this dreadful business first appears on the pages of history a new name which, though it rises red as blood in the gloom, yet presently shines out as one of the most splendid stars in all the firmament of human history. "The witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul."

In this incriminating attitude is first seen him who at first was the most powerful persecutor of the new faith and afterward became its most powerful preacher.

At first Saul stood in the background as a silent accomplice, but now he steps into the foreground, boldly flying his colors as a persecutor and ravager of the church. Having got a taste of blood Saul wanted more of it and grew furious as he made havoc of the church, laying it waste as a wild boar ravages a vineyard. He did not wait for Christians to be brought to him but he went after them, searching every house and hunting them out, men and women, and thrusting them into prison. He inaugurated a reign of terror, and his fiery zeal flamed out on that sacred mountain top like a volcano.

Does he not seem to be protesting too much against the new faith?

Did the expiring cry of Stephen enter his very soul and leave a hurt that would not heal until he found peace in confession and faith in the very gospel he had once sought to destroy?

A wounded conscience may whip an unhappy heart into mad distraction, and Stephen's death-cries may have been the pricks and stings that tormented Saul and drove him to such fury, but that at last ended in his conversion. This is another story.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How did Stephen come to be elected a deacon?
2. How much of the "customs of Moses" yet remain?
3. Are the Jews yet standing by Moses as against Jesus?
4. Does persecution accomplish its purpose?
5. Saul followed his conscience: how far is it a safe guide?

LESSON III—JULY 15

The Conversion of Saul

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Saul Became a Christian.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Conversion of a Pharisee.

Golden Text: Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I Tim. 1:15.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:41–48.

Lesson Passage: Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–16; I Cor. 15:8.

Lesson Text: Acts 22:6–16

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I looked up on him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Conversion in Its Preparatory Stage.***
2. ***Conversion at Its Crisis.***
3. ***Conversion Carried On.***
4. ***Conversion a Complex Process.***
5. ***Conversion Completed.***

The ascended Christ, having risen to heaven, began to carry on his work on earth. As in his earthly ministry he first gathered around him-

self disciples whom he trained to be leaders, so now in his heavenly kingship he early called into his service the great apostle who was to be such a power in extending his kingdom.

Black carbon may become white diamond, and Saul, the greatest persecutor of the gospel, became its greatest preacher.

The story of his conversion is one of the most interesting and dramatic pages in the history of the founding of the Christian church and marks its greatest epoch.

1. Conversion in Its Preparatory Stage

Events, however suddenly they may come, have far-away hidden roots, and it was so with the conversion of Saul.

At first he was the deadly enemy of Christ and his gospel. His soul blazed with zeal and hatred against the disciples of Jesus and he breathed out fire and slaughter. His presence in Jerusalem made that sacred mountain top a flaming volcano that scorched and burnt the faith that soon would have made it blossom with new life. Presently the holy city was a cinder, practically clear of the gospel. The disciples were dead, or fled, or in hiding.

But Saul was not satisfied.

He considered the new way of worshiping a most dangerous and deadly heresy which must be destroyed branch and root. He would make thorough work of it and not leave the smallest germ in the most distant city to sprout and spread. He had heard of, or suspected, the presence of believers in Damascus, and, armed with authority from the priests, he set out for that ancient city that he might search it and bring any men or women tainted with heresy to Jerusalem. It took Saul several days to journey on a horse or a camel from Jerusalem 140 miles northward to Damascus.

This must have been a time of cooling down and quiet meditation in his fiery soul.

The excitement and passion of his work in Jerusalem had subsided and he found himself out in the solitude and silence of the desert under the solemn stars.

Conscience began to consider.

If this still small voice had been drowned in the confusion of the city, it now had a chance to speak. He unexpectedly found himself troubled over his work.

Did the expiring cry of Stephen keep ringing through his soul?

He was surprised to find his convictions were not so unanimous and solid as he had supposed. Cracks and fractures began to cleave his conscience into doubts. He felt himself on the eve of an impending crisis, already conscience was ripe for revolt.

This view of his psychological condition is not explicitly disclosed in the record, but it is in accordance with human experience and is suggested by the statement in the narrative that it was as he made his journey that the crisis came.

2. Conversion at Its Crisis

Upon this thoughtful troubled man conversion fell. Damascus was near and decision could not be delayed.

The Holy Spirit found him trembling upon the point of doubt and bore down upon him at this critical moment.

As in all conversions, divine and human elements were interblended and worked together. There were spectacular features in this case that were supernatural and unique, but the same principles work in every converted soul.

A blinding light burned through the sky above him and the proud persecutor was unhorsed. A voice was then heard saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" This was probably the very question that was troubling Saul himself.

The Spirit touched the sorest and most sensitive point in his conscience, piercing his sin.

It is generally some form of this question that presses upon the soul in conversion. What is our relation to Jesus? Are we persecuting him or are we pleasing him?

Saul answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" Already he seems to know the questioner and has changed his attitude towards him as his Lord.

At least he is in an attitude of honest inquiry; he wants to know the truth and to such a soul the truth shall come.

A wonderful answer was given to this inquiry: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." This was a startling revelation and might well have struck terror into Saul's soul. But he was fast falling into an attitude of faith and obedience. "What shall I do, Lord?" was now his inquiry.

Already his resistless energies were being reversed and were eager to flow in the channel of service for Jesus.

And the answer came, "Arise, and go into Damascus." Not another word about the persecution, but only words of kindness and guidance and promise were spoken to the prostrate humbled man. Saul's sin was overwhelmed with God's mercy and washed away in a flood of grace.

Christ comes not to judge us but to save us, and when we turn to him in penitence and faith our sin is forgiven and forgotten.

The attendants of Saul heard the sound but did not understand it and saw no man. Every soul has experiences in conversion that are hidden from others. They may see and hear outward signs, but they cannot hear the voices that are heard in the heart.

This manifestation of the risen Jesus to Saul is related three times in the Acts, twice by himself (*22:6–11*; *26:12–20*).

Paul was no emotional enthusiast that would be liable to mistake subjective imagination for objective reality, but was a man of eminently logical and sane judgment, and his repeated positive attestation of this fact is one of the proofs of the resurrection of Jesus and of the truth of the gospel.

3. Conversion Carried On

Saul's conversion was now begun, but was not complete; he had passed the critical turning point, but had yet many steps to take. The voice bade him rise and enter the city where he would receive further direction.

Conversion does not answer all questions and clear up all difficulties. It usually makes plain only a few steps which will lead us into more light.

Saul took these few steps: he arose from the ground and went into the city. He immediately obeyed his newly found Lord, threw his will into the current of his Master's will and turned his faith into faithfulness.

There was much that he did not know, he could not see, he was being led by the hand like a little child in the dark; but one thing he did know, that Jesus was his Lord and his soul was forever set in its purpose to trust and obey him.

This is the perfection of faith, not to know many things, to be led by the hand through thick darkness, yet to trust our Lord and follow on.

The blindness continued with Saul three days, during which he neither ate nor drank. His conversion did not immediately issue in light and peace and joy, but rather shrouded his soul in deep darkness. The storm that broke upon him in such violence could not suddenly subside. The great deeps of his soul had been stirred and they continued to surge and sob for many hours.

These were doubtless days of profound meditation and self-examination.

Saul sat alone with himself and thought upon his ways. The past was full of pain, and the future of problems. Perhaps doubts still bordered his faith and he had wrestlings and agonies. He wanted to be sure of himself and of his Lord and he fought every doubt through to victory. But through all this darkness he simply followed the Lord's will, and obedience brought him into the light.

Conversion is not always peace but sometimes is pain. Doubt plunges the soul into deeper darkness.

But light always lies forward and not backward, and it is only by following on to know the Lord that our path will grow bright and shine more and more unto the perfect day.

4. Conversion a Complex Process

Others had part in this work of grace, and we see how complex is the process of conversion.

His attendants led the blinded man by the hand into the city. It is pathetic to think of Paul, one of the great men of the world, being led as though he were a little child, perhaps by a servant.

But this great soul could not come into the kingdom without the help of some very common and humble people.

We are all members one of another, and the strongest needs the help of the weakest, and the most learned can get some profitable guidance from the most illiterate. We may not be great ourselves and may be the weakest of the weak and humblest of the humble, but we do a great thing when we take any human being by the hand and lead him through darkness into the city of God.

This is the work of the minister, and teacher, and parent, and of every Christian.

In the city, also, there was need of human coöperation. The same Spirit that converted Saul called Ananias to come to his help. Ananias knew of Saul as the bloody persecutor—what Christian in that city did not know of Saul? so far had his dread name spread—and was frightened at the message and thought there might be some mistake about it.

But the Lord assured him that it was all right and presently he stood before the terrible persecutor, addressing him as "Brother Saul" and bidding him receive the Holy Ghost.

When the Lord bids us seek a struggling soul, no doubt or fear or difficulty should keep us back. The Spirit visited that soul before he sent for us and prepared the way for our coming.

In every duty the Lord is ahead of us in the way opening it before our feet.

5. Conversion Completed

The Holy Spirit now came upon Saul and conversion was soon complete. He was filled full of faith and fervency. His mind cleared up into sharp and sure conviction, and his heart grew calm and strong. Blindness fell from his eyes. He now knew whom he believed and was henceforth able to do all things, Christ strengthening him.

Two steps he immediately took that are among the first acts of the Christian life. First, he was baptized.

Obedience with him was full obedience. He saw no point at which to draw the line or hesitate in the commands and ordinances of Christ, but he simply obeyed them all. Baptism was the commanded badge of discipleship and, therefore, he would wear it.

He would no more be ashamed of the sign than he would of the Saviour.

Faith that stops short of full obedience in confession is of doubtful depth and genuineness and had better not be trusted.

Having been baptized Saul straightway preached Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. Having received he was now ready to give, and his own grace grew as he imparted it to others. He now received his appointment to be a witness unto all men, and at once entered upon his great career. What splendid and powerful preaching it was that began there that day! How it has shaped the centuries and enriched and transformed the world.

We all sit under its divine eloquence and feel its transfiguring force.

Not with such iron logic and golden utterance and holy fervor may we preach the gospel, but we, too, in our humble way may proclaim Jesus, that he is the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

The world needs not only great oceans and rivers, but also the little streams that feed the meadows, and even the tiny raindrops that each one picks out its own blade of grass and makes it green.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What does the word conversion mean?
2. What steps usually precede conversion with us?
3. How does God lead us out of uncertainty into clear conviction?
4. What are we "appointed" to do in the world?
5. What different types of conversion do we find in the Bible?

LESSON IV—JULY 22

Saul's Early Ministry

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Saul Champions an Unpopular Cause.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Years of Growing Experience.

Golden Text: Straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God. Acts 9:20.

Devotional Reading: Romans 12:1–8.

Lesson Passage: Acts 9:19–30; 11:19–30; 12:25; Gal. 1:15–18.

Lesson Text: Acts 9:19–30; 11:25–26

19 And he took food and was strengthened. And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Damascus.

20 And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God.

21 And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests.

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

23 And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him:

24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him:

25 But his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

26 And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem,

29 Preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they were seeking to kill him.

30 And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

25 And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul;

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Saul the Powerful Preacher.

2. Amazed Hearers.

3. A Plot to Kill.
4. Saul in Jerusalem.
5. Saul in Antioch.
6. A New Name.

Conversion means turning around, reversing one's direction, and sometimes it takes place gradually, as in the case of Lydia (Acts 16:14–15), and other times it occurs with the suddenness of an earthquake, as in the case of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:27–34), which immediately followed that of Lydia, crowding these strikingly opposed types of conversion closely together.

There are various types of conversion, modified by native disposition and temperament, or by circumstances and occasions, and any type is proper and good when it is a door into the kingdom.

Paul, volcanic and explosive in temperament, did whatever he did with all his might, and when he was converted he suddenly as a flash of light turned completely around and began to preach the very faith he had sought to destroy.

1. Saul the Powerful Preacher

"And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God." The word "straightway" shows how closely Saul connected his conversion with his action. There was no lost motion between his conscience and his conduct; his new faith was quickly turned into the channel of service. He compacted his faith into fact, and thus made it a glowing reality in his own experience and imparted it as a similar experience to others.

His theology was not a mere theory to be shut up within his own mind, but a living force that flowed out of his life and began to change the world.

He began his preaching in the synagogues with his own people in his own church. This is in accordance with the psychology that should lead every convert to try to win his former associates to his new views; and it is a good way to begin, using the old threads of association to weave a new web of better relations.

All through his career Saul pursued this policy, beginning in the synagogue wherever he was, and going out from it to others only when he

was driven out by unbelieving Jews. Jesus told his disciples to begin their preaching at Jerusalem and then work outwards in widening circles over the world, and our Christian duty begins in our home and follows the same expanding principle.

The chief fact about any man is his message, what does he have to say to the world, what program does he propose and what power can he put behind it.

The greatness of Saul was due, more than to anything else, to the greatness of his message.

He preached " Jesus, that he is the Son of God."

He was not proclaiming Jesus as a great teacher, a new intellectual light that had arisen in the world, or as a great prophet or philosopher, another Moses or Isaiah, or a Plato or an Aristotle, for the world had enough prophets and philosophers, and human genius and wisdom had gone as far as they could in solving the great world problems of sin and salvation. Some higher revelation must now be given, some divine power and person must come into the world and none other could meet and master the situation.

Saul's great message was that this Person had come in Jesus and that he is the Son of God.

Other prophets were only forerunners of this Prophet, the morning dawn of this Sun. Saul seized this truth and this truth seized and absorbed the soul of Saul and became his overmastering possession and passion so that it ruled and energized his whole life.

It was this truth and only this truth that gave the gospel its power in those early days when it was turning the world upside down and converting the vilest sinners into the purest saints and everywhere proving itself the power of God unto salvation.

And this fact is still the power of the gospel.

If Jesus be reduced to the level and rank of a mere man, however great his religious genius and spotless and splendid his character, his Saviourhood is gone and he is only another human teacher impotent in the presence of the tremendous realities of sin in the world.

Let us be frank and face the fact: it is only as we preach and teach that Jesus is the unique Son of God that we have any gospel to preach, and all other teaching will in time turn to sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

2. Amazed Hearers

What effect did such preaching have? "All that heard him were amazed." They were amazed that the very man that had been such an unrelenting and deadly persecutor of the Christian faith was now preaching it with such marvelous fervency and power.

Saul was a wonderful and even amazing instance of what the gospel can do in turning a man around and transforming him into a new person.

The change was all the more wonderful in that Saul was no merely emotional man easily swept off his feet on some gust of excitement or passion, but he was also a cool and logical thinker and had to see the reason for any change and be intellectually convinced of its truth. He had gone through this process suddenly and yet the roots of it ran far back and his conversion was only the psychological and logical outcome of what had been going on, since the stoning of Stephen, in his mind under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

We see similar conversions all down through the Christian centuries and as remarkable ones in our day.

Conversion takes place among some of our highest intellectuals, such as Romanes the scientific agnostic, and Papini the literary sceptic, and not less but even more remarkable are many conversions among the most deeply degraded and desperately wicked men, such as are recorded in Harold Begbie's *Twice Born Men*.

There is no accounting for conversions that thus totally reverse and transform men in character and life on mere psychological and psychoanalytic principles, and they can be explained only on the ground of the presence and working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men.

While the amazement grew at Saul's preaching, Saul himself "increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ." Saul's faith fed on its own fervency, his preaching to others reacted on himself and deepened and intensified his own convictions.

It is just so with us: the way to increase faith is to use it in persuading others and the more we give it the more we get it.

Saul was proving to the Jews that Jesus "is the Christ," or Messiah, their own long-expected Prophet and Saviour. The Jews were slow to grasp this truth, many of them rejected it, their nation failed to see the day of its splendid opportunity, and this blindness is the pathos and tragedy of their history.

May not we miss the same vital and glorious truth?

3. A Plot to Kill

Persecution now arose against the persecutor, Saul was given a dose of his own medicine, the sword that he had used against others was now turned against himself. Such is human nature, and on a large scale it has been proved recently as well as many times in history that they that seize the sword shall perish by the sword.

"The Jews took counsel together to kill him." How often has this counsel been taken and this means of meeting unwelcome truth been tried? Nothing seems a quicker and surer answer to a man whose teaching we do not like than to strike off his head: that stops his talking and seems such a convincing and conclusive refutation of his heresy.

Yet often as it has been tried this method has never yet proved any man wrong or even permanently silenced his teaching.

Truth has a way of rising even when stricken or crushed to the earth and is immortal.

This old feeling that we would like to get at those opposed to us in some quick and short and sure way is still lurking in us. There are other swords than those forged of steel, and ecclesiastical persecution, and extreme discipline may be not far removed in spirit and even in method and results from the use of the sword.

We have not so learned Christ, and the whole spirit of the Master and of the gospel is against such means of repelling error and compelling faith.

4. Saul in Jerusalem

Friends took Saul by night and let him down over the wall of the city, eluding enemies that were watching at the gates day and night, and we next find him in Jerusalem.

However, we learn from Galatians 1:17–18 that Saul did not immediately go to Jerusalem at this time but went into retirement in Arabia,

probably for further meditation, and it was three years after his conversion that he went to Jerusalem and spent fifteen days with Peter and James, the Lord's brother.

His appearance in Jerusalem created alarm among the disciples and when he tried to join their company "they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple." They can hardly be blamed for this attitude, for they were not yet assured of the genuineness of the conversion of the great persecutor.

Saul the new convert was the object of suspicion and fear growing out of his old reputation, and this is a social penalty that ever follows bad character.

However, Barnabas, true to his name and spirit, took Saul in hand and vouched for the reality of his conversion and assured the brethren that the Lord had spoken to Saul and that he had preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus. This at once put Saul in good standing with the disciples in Jerusalem and he preached boldly in that city.

Barnabas exemplified the true principle and set the right example to follow in composing differences and doubts among Christian brethren.

Here Saul disappears from our view for about ten years, which may be numbered among his "silent years" of further meditation and preparation.

5. Saul in Antioch

A great Christian revival was going on down in Antioch, where the gospel for the first time was being openly preached to the Gentiles in that Greek city. The conservative party in Jerusalem thought the matter should be looked into and sent Barnabas down to investigate.

He saw the grace of God in the new movement and the work multiplied.

Presently Barnabas saw the need of help and he went around the Mediterranean shore to Tarsus for Saul, whom he now brought to Antioch and the two men there labored together and founded a church that grew into one of the most influential churches in the early history of Christianity.

These two workers were very different in their personal constitution and gifts, but they complemented each other and worked together in complete harmony. We have "gifts differing," and all types and temperaments are needed in the work of the church.

6. A New Name

At this point a new name appears in the record that shines as a star whose lustre has brightened with increasing ages and shall never be dimmed. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Probably the name was given in ridicule, but like many another such word it has become a mark of honor and shines above every other name given among men.

It may at first have been a contemptuous derisive jest, but now it sparkles as one of the most precious gems in the vast heap of words that men have accumulated through the ages; it runs as a glittering thread of gold through all the web of human speech.

But now that we have the name, we should strive to live up towards it. "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Illustrate types of conversion from other instances in the Bible.
2. What were some characteristics of the preaching of Saul?
3. What kind of a man was Barnabas?
4. Would it be good to have all preachers and teachers of the same type?
5. How do words originate?

LESSON V—JULY 29

The First Foreign Missionaries

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Paul Found His Life Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Holy Spirit in Missions.

Golden Text: Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Matt. 28:19–20.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 67.

Lesson Passage: Acts 13:1–52.

Lesson Text: Acts 13:1–5, 13–15, 44–49

1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant.

13 Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem.

14 But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

44 And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.

46 And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.

48 And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. A Call for Missionaries.
2. Barnabas and Saul Chosen.
3. In the Island of Cyprus.
4. In Antioch of Pisidia.
5. Turning from the Jews to the Gentiles.

A new chapter in this history opens, not in Jerusalem but in Antioch. Jerusalem was the seat of conservatism and the Holy Spirit had to start a new center of progress.

The kingdom of God cannot be shut up within any particular place or church, but breaks out in unexpected places and ways.

Antioch, which gave birth to the first Gentile church, became the mother of foreign missions and of Gentile Christianity.

The gospel has wonderful self-propagating fertility and energy, and every additional church becomes a new center for its further spread.

1. A Call for Missionaries

That was a strong church down in Antioch; it had prophets and teachers that were men of spiritual genius and power. Two of them, Barnabas and Saul, were eminent leaders in the church at large and one of them, Manaen, was connected with an influential family in the political world.

The church has abundant room in it for common people, but it must also get hold of the best brains. Not many mighty may be called, but some of them may and must be.

While the members and officers of this church engaged in serving the Lord in worship, the Holy Spirit came upon them with a call for further service. Faithfulness in present duty is the opening way to enlargement.

When the Lord wants a man for important business he picks one that is busy already. The man that is doing no good where he is would do no good anywhere.

The call of the Spirit was, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." A new line of work was about

to be opened and men specially fitted had to be selected and set apart for the service. The principle of division of labor which is so productive in the industrial world is equally operative and fruitful in the spiritual field. God does not send men into fields indiscriminately, but he seeks to separate them and put the right man at the right post.

Every man has a divine calling, that matches his personal gift and situation, and it is his business to find his field and do with his might what God has given him to do.

2. Barnabas and Saul Chosen

How did the church receive this call? "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Immediate obedience followed the call of the Spirit.

We might have expected some doubt and opposition to this course.

Barnabas and Saul were easily the two ablest men in that church: how plausible and strong would be the plea that they were needed at home. Was not Antioch a great city and center that ought to be seized and conquered for Christ first? And how could this be done if the ablest men and leaders in this church were sent away? If the heart is weakened will not the whole body suffer?

If this policy was suggested, it did not prevail, but the divine selection was trusted and carried out. The Spirit did pick out the strongest men in that church to send away as foreign missionaries, and this has been the divine policy to this day.

The foreign field is no place for weak men: let the church send her strongest and most gifted sons and daughters there.

And this has been done ever since, and such names as David Livingstone and John G. Paton shine out like stars upon the pages of foreign missions.

It may have seemed a poor use and needless sacrifice of Barnabas and Saul to bury them in the obscurity and darkness of heathenism, but it was the same kind of sacrifice as that by which a grain of wheat falls into the ground to spring up a hundredfold, and Christian Europe is its splendid fruit to-day.

3. In the Island of Cyprus

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Seleucia was the seaport of Antioch, twenty miles down the Orontes at its mouth. Possibly members of the church went with the departing missionaries as far as this port, where they bade them farewell and saw them disappear on board a wheatship on the blue Mediterranean.

The narrative interblends human and divine action, in one verse attributing their departure to the church and in the next verse to the Holy Spirit. The Christian is in all things a coworker with God, so that he lives and yet not he, but Christ liveth in him.

They sailed westward, for this has been the course of spiritual empire, as in the political world, until it has encircled the globe.

John, whose surname was Mark, a young man who afterwards wrote the gospel bearing his name, was with them as an attendant.

A sail of eighty miles brought them to Cyprus, celebrated for its copper mines, our word copper being derived from the name Cyprus, the native island of Barnabas, where they began work.

They first preached the word of God in Salamis to the Jews in their synagogues in accordance with their policy from the beginning.

They tried to find common ground on which to stand with others, they seized upon the good they found in the heathen world and used it as a point of approach and contact from which they could preach the gospel.

The missionaries worked their way westward through the island without anything of special importance happening until they came to Paphos at its western extremity. Here lived the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus. He was a man of serious thought and spiritual aspiration who hungered for something better than was offered by the effete Roman religions. He was some such man as Cornelius, possibly another wild-growing saint out in the wilderness of the heathen world, and there appear to have been many such in the Roman Empire.

God has more souls waiting for him out in pagan twilight than we may know or suspect.

Sergius sent for the missionaries to come up to his palace and desired to hear their message. Here was a most promising opening for the

gospel, but it soon struck a rock of opposition in the person of Bar-jesus, a sorcerer.

Judgment fell upon the sorcerer, but Sergius was converted to the new light and found peace and joy in believing.

4. In Antioch in Pisidia

The missionaries now crossed over to the main land in Asia Minor, and at this point in the narrative the name Saul changes to Paul.

Here John Mark left the company and returned to Jerusalem. The fact is stated without explanation or comment, but we know that Paul disapproved of Mark's course and afterward this matter separated Paul and Barnabas (15:37–38).

So the first missionary movement was marred with human imperfection and dissension, and divine grace has not yet eliminated this element from our work.

The missionaries now left the low-lying, fever-infected coast and struck up into the mountains, making their first stopping-place at Antioch in Pisidia. This was a considerable city whose ruins yet remain. There was a Jewish synagogue in the place, and, in accordance with their method of campaigning, the missionaries attended its service on the Sabbath.

It was the custom in the synagogue to ask strangers to speak, and, the invitation having been given, Paul stood and lifted his hand in that characteristic gesture of his that was so effective in commanding attention (21:40). He then addressed the audience in a speech that is a masterpiece of logical persuasion.

The point of his argument is that Jesus was their promised Messiah.

In a rapid but exceedingly graphic sketch he traced the leading features of Hebrew history up to David, at which point he skillfully introduced Jesus as the promised seed of David and Saviour of men. The whole history of the nation in which the Jews had such intense pride was thus concentrated and massed behind Jesus as their own Messiah; he was presented to them as the outflowering and fulfillment of all their hopes.

And equally Jesus is the fulfillment of all our hopes.

Having concluded his address, Paul and Barnabas passed out of the synagogue, and some of the Jews and devout proselytes, who were Gentile converts to Judaism, followed them and entered into conversation with them.

Paul and Barnabas thus held an after-meeting in which they followed up their preaching and gathered in its results.

This is a method that our evangelists still follow and that should be used in connection with all our work. Public preaching and teaching often produce convictions and resolutions in hearers which are lost because there is no immediate opportunity to crystallize them into action.

Many a general has lost a battle by not following up the first successful attack, and the Christian worker needs to be a good soldier and use every means of winning victories for Christ.

5. Turning from the Jews to the Gentiles

The news of the sensational sermon of the stranger in the synagogue spread through the city and the next Sabbath a great congregation thronged the place.

Doubtless mixed motives drew the crowd.

When the Jews saw the multitudes they bristled up with opposition, spoke out against the teachings of Paul, and grew abusive. What was the cause of their anger?

The popularity of the strange preachers had something to do with it.

It is hard to see our rivals surpassing us in popularity and success, and even ministers of religion are human enough to wince under this experience. The scribes in this synagogue were very human, and they turned the tide against the new preachers.

A deeper root of their opposition was their sincere belief that the new teaching was revolutionary and destructive.

In fact, the transition from Judaism to Christianity was so great and radical that we do not wonder that it was hard for the Jews to turn from the old faith to the new.

But Paul and Barnabas were not men to be intimidated by opposition and wrath and they dared to speak boldly for the new faith. The gospel was to begin with the Jews, but it was not to stop with them, and Paul proceeded to show them the next step. "Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"; and Paul justified this course with a conclusive quotation from their own Scriptures.

If we do not improve our privileges, they will be taken from us and be given to those that will appreciate and use them.

The selfishness that would withhold from others the blessings that God has given us may bring upon us judgment that will take away even that which we have.

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God.

Here are different ways in which the same message may be received by different classes of hearers.

As the same sunlight melts wax and hardens clay, so the same truth may touch one heart into tenderness and faith, and turn another towards hardness and unbelief. The same sermon may convert some souls and send others away unconvinced or scoffing.

The Gentiles were not only glad, but they also glorified the word of God: they praised the truth and turned it into such gracious deeds and beautiful character as reflected the glory of God himself, even as the humblest flower transmutes some light into color and beauty and thereby glorifies the mighty sun.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is the foreign missionary spirit in the old Testament?
2. Why did Jesus not go out himself to foreign countries?
3. What are some of the obstacles that foreign missionaries now meet in their work?
4. What draws a great congregation?
5. What are some of the outstanding achievements of foreign missions?

LESSON VI—AUGUST 5

Paul in a Pagan Country

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul Unmoved by Flattery and Danger.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Heroism of Foreign Missions.

Golden Text: I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound. Phil. 4:12.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:10–16.

Lesson Passage: Acts 14:1–28.

Lesson Text: Acts 14:1–15

1 And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed.

2 But the Jews that were disobedient stirred up the souls of the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren.

3 Long time therefore they tarried *there* speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when there was made an onset both of the Gentiles and of the Jews with their rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them,

6 They became aware of it, and fled unto the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the region round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And at Lystra there sat a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.

9 The same heard Paul speaking: who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and walked.

11 And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker.

13 And the priest of Jupiter whose *temple* was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes.

14 But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Stoned at Iconium.

2. Worshiped at Lystra.

3. The False Worship Rejected.
4. The True Worship Preached.
5. A Startling Change in the Scene.

The situation at Antioch soon became untenable for Paul and Barnabas. While the word of the gospel was spreading the Jews stirred up increasing opposition, urging on "the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city" against them.

They got the women after them!

The missionaries were driven out of the town, but, nothing daunted, proceeded about a day's journey to the next town, Iconium.

1. Stoned at Iconium

The missionaries opened their work at Iconium in the synagogue and a multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed. They continued their work for some days, "speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

There is a religious soil as universal as human nature that is ready to receive and respond to the seeds of religious truth and grace.

It is this that makes missionary work possible and promising to-day in every part of the world. Whether among cultivated people or superstitious heathen or degraded savages the gospel has an affinity with the nature and the needs of the human heart and falls upon it often like rain upon a parched field or breathes on it like a summer sun.

If the gospel were foreign and alien to our human world it could gain no footing and make no progress, but the same Lord who made the human heart also made the gospel and bears witness to it as the word of his grace, and so it has free course and is glorified.

Yet its course meets with opposition and obstructions and it was so in Iconium.

The town became divided, part favoring and others opposing the apostles, with the result that a mob of both Jews and Gentiles made a rush "to treat them shamefully and stone them," and the missionaries made their escape.

Such scenes are no longer enacted in Christian towns, but there are other ways of showing opposition than stoning preachers, and they are still here and there subjected to treatment not less unjust and cruel.

Ministers and teachers of the gospel are not carried through the world or even through their own parishes on flowery beds of ease, and we must be willing to pay the price of faithful service and endure hardness as good soldiers.

2. Worshiped at Lystra

The next town was Lystra, about twenty-five miles south of Iconium. Here Paul wrought a notable work of healing and this record in the Acts reads like a leaf out of the gospels.

The wonder created a great sensation and was followed with unexpected and astonishing results.

The people cried out that the gods were come down among them in the likeness of men; they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury; and presently the priest of Jupiter appeared with oxen and garlands to offer them a sacrifice.

The whole performance was idolatrous and superstitious in its outer form, but it was deeply and sincerely religious in its inner spirit.

The fundamental roots of religion are here uncovered out on heathen soil. These rough pagan mountaineers believed in religion. The world was not simply so much brute matter to them, but was alive with divine spirit. Their gods were many, yet they had some conception of a supreme being in Jupiter.

These people had something to look up to; their sky was not empty, but it contained a Father's face.

Next, they believed that their gods came down to them in the likeness of men; their deity was not far off, an unknowable God that kept himself forever hidden from men, but he manifested himself to them.

They expected a revelation; the incarnation was not foreign to their thoughts.

And, finally, they believed in sacrifice and worship; they felt the need of divine propitiation; atonement for sin was an element in their religion.

They gave of their substance to these sacrifices and engaged in public worship.

Here are the main roots of religion and of Christianity itself; all these roots need is to have the light of divine truth and the rains of divine grace fall upon them and they will sprout and blossom. The apostles did not have to create a religious nature in the heathen, for they found it already there waiting as seeds wait for summer.

Religion is not the product of any priestly invention, but it is the unfolding of a native capacity in man and is as universal, natural and necessary as physical hunger or affectional craving.

These Lystrans were feeling their dim way after God, and they found him in Christ. And so shall every soul be blessed that seeks the Father's face. Heathen worshipers set us an example and often put us to shame.

And so the same missionaries that were stoned at Iconium were next worshiped at Lystra, and their spiritual experience was subject to violent changes of weather.

3. The False Worship Rejected

How did Paul and Barnabas receive this offered tribute of worship?

Here was a great opportunity and temptation for self-seeking vain men.

If popularity was their aim and price of their preaching it was here offered to them in unbounded measure. Plausible reasons could have been urged why they should have lent some encouragement to these misguided but well-meaning people. Might not the missionaries thus get these pagans more thoroughly under their influence, and then more effectively do them good?

There are few temptations so dangerous and fatal to a preacher as an itching for popularity and public applause.

Of course public esteem is a powerful instrument for good with ministers, and there are legitimate ways of gaining it; but when it becomes a self-seeking conscious aim and pursuit and passion that resorts to mere meretricious means and degenerates into blatant sensationalism, it is a vanity and folly that soon runs its course.

Paul and Barnabas made short work with it on this occasion.

When they heard of what was going on, they rent their clothes after the Oriental fashion, rushed out among the people and called upon them to stop, crying, " Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring unto you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God."

This was a brave speech that stamped these missionaries with a greatness they never would have attained had they permitted themselves to be worshiped as gods.

Paul and Barnabas would not sail under false colors or palm themselves off as something they were not. They would not allow themselves to be dressed up in any fictitious reputation, though it made them shine; they would not tolerate any veneering and gilding on their character, but let their true worth show its plain but genuine wood, which was solid all the way through. Popularity and power were no temptation to them; they were simply bearers of good tidings, who did not come to receive greatness but to give grace.

False reputation, which so many are willing to assume and even seek, is but a bubble that is sure to burst. Reality is the only substantiality.

Every one should disclaim fictitious worth and strip off all assumed airs and simply be himself. That they are but men of like passions with others is a wholesome fact for ministers and all Christians to remember.

We are but servants and messengers and are to let our light shine so that others, seeing our good works, will forget us and glorify not us, but our Father who is in heaven.

4. The True Worship Preached

The missionaries, having thus diverted attention from themselves, now turned the minds of the people " unto the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is," and instead of their vain things gave them bread.

Christianity never calls upon people, even pagans, to give up any part of their religion or their possessions without giving them some better thing in its stead.

It cuts off dead branches and poisonous parasites only that it may let the tree of true faith grow up and bear the rich fruits of better life. Christ calls us away from the vain things of the earth that he may feed us with the bread of heaven.

Religion robs us of no real good, but enlarges and enriches us.

It may take from us many a dead idol, but only that it may give us the living God. Even when our best hopes are disappointed it is because God has provided some better thing for us.

If we have to give up old truth which is precious to us, it is that larger truth may take its place.

Paul was the preacher of this sermon, and its style is unmistakably his own. In preaching to the Jews he had quoted their Scriptures and proved his points from the Psalms; but in preaching to the Gentiles to whom these writings were unknown, he quoted from the older and vaster Bible of nature which is read and known of all men, and appealed to heaven and earth and sea as witnesses to God and his goodness.

God's Word and God's Works were written and fashioned by the same hand and they agree.

Genesis and geology wonderfully match, and sunshine and seed and shower, bee and blossom, preach the same gospel of divine wisdom and beneficence as Isaiah and John.

The world in which we live is the ever-speaking appeal of Mind to mind, of the Father to his children.

5. A Startling Change in the Scene

It would be hard to find in all literature a more sudden and startling contrast than that which meets us at this point. In one verse we are told that the missionaries scarcely restrained the people from worshiping them as gods, and in the next verse we read that one of them was stoned and left for dead; so fickle is the human heart, so unsubstantial and evanescent is popularity.

History is full of such irony.

The man that is almost worshiped to-day as a god may be forgotten or execrated to-morrow. Popularity is a poor thing to trust in and live on, and whoever pins his faith to it will find it a shadow.

We first saw Paul lending a helping hand at the stoning of Stephen and here he is getting a taste of his own medicine.

Paul stoned Christians to make them Jews, but he never stoned Jews to make them Christians.

Christianity makes no converts with the sword. Paul was a greater man when others were stoning him than when he was stoning others. When a brutal soldier lifted a sword over Milton, saying, "I have power to kill you," the scholar and poet calmly replied, "And I have power to be killed and to despise my murderer."

It is greater to be stoned ourselves than to stone others.

We may broadly divide people into two classes: wrongdoers and wrong sufferers, and it is more blessed to be in the latter than in the former class.

These Jews that stirred up this persecution against Paul followed him all the way from Antioch in Pisidia to Lystra. Some people will go a great way to pay off a grudge, and spite often has a long memory.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Describe the geography of Galatia in Asia Minor.
2. What good is there in heathen religions to-day?
3. If there is good in pagan faiths, why do we send missionaries to heathen lands?
4. Can and ought we always to find some common ground with those from whom we differ?
5. Give recent instances of how public men of great popularity suddenly lost it. Ought we to care much about such loss?

LESSON VII—AUGUST 12

The Council at Jerusalem

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul Opposes Religious Prejudices.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul Stands for Christian Liberty.

Golden Text: If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:36.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 133.
Lesson Passage: Acts 15:1–35; Gal. 1:15.

Lesson Text: Acts 15:1–11

1 And certain men came down from Judæa and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, *the brethren* appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 They therefore, being brought on their way by the church, passed through both Phœnicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them,

Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us;

9 And he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Controversy in Antioch.
2. Conference as Its Solution.
3. The Council at Jerusalem.
4. Decision of the Council.

The problem of the relation of Christianity to Judaism was always in the background of the first Christians and from time to time came forward in an acute form. It started with Stephen, as we have seen, and it came to a crisis over the conversion and baptism of the Roman officer Cornelius, which precipitated the first council in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1–18) when it was declared that "to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life," thus freeing Christianity from the restrictions of Judaism and letting it out into the Gentile world.

The question now arose in a somewhat different form, and a second council was called when Gentiles were admitted without circumcision and thus the Christian faith was fully freed from the old shell of Judaistic ceremony and permitted to spread its wings for universal flight.

1. Controversy in Antioch

The return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch from the first missionary journey precipitated this controversy. The Judaistic party at Jerusalem, that were opposed to admitting Gentiles, were freshly alarmed at this wide incursion into Gentile territory and free extension of the church among the uncircumcised and saw that decisive action must be taken.

"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

This is akin to but not just the same question that was decided at the first council in Jerusalem.

There the question was, Shall Gentile converts be admitted to the Christian church? Here the question is, Shall they be admitted without being circumcised? Defeated at the first point, these Judaizers are bringing up practically the same issue in another form.

We must try to put ourselves in the place of these Judaizers and see the situation from their point of view.

It seemed to them that the admission of Gentiles into the church without circumcision was destructive of the whole system of Moses that had been consecrated by more than a thousand years of glorious history.

This was a terrible wrench and shock to their orthodox consciences, and we may well appreciate if not sympathize with their sore experience.

Yet however conscientious they were, they were not blameless in their blindness to the breadth and liberty of the gospel.

Paul calls them "false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Gal. 2:4). Pharisees before conversion, the Pharisaic spirit clung to them after conversion.

Conservatism in them was crystallized into fixity and finality.

They were narrow literalists who could see no room for growth and progress and could tolerate no difference of opinion. And so they went about among the brethren as spies and heresy hunters, stirring up dissension and subverting souls.

We have not yet seen the passing of all the people that say that others must believe after their "custom," or "ye cannot be saved."

We all have a comfortable feeling that we embody the closest approximation of truth that has yet been reached and that others are right in proportion as they agree with us. This narrow spirit has troubled the church from the beginning and has split it into a thousand fragments.

Loyalty to truth is a great virtue, but it becomes schismatic and a menace when some men's sense of truth is set up as a standard of orthodoxy and condition of salvation for others.

2. Conference as Its Solution

How was this controversy carried on and settled? It might have been conducted so as to have torn the church in Antioch and the church at large to pieces and have left warring fragments that would soon have perished from the world.

But a more excellent way was found and followed that brought peace and saved the church and Christianity.

"And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas and

certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." "And the apostles and elders were gathered together to consider of this matter."

They did not fight it out to the bitter end, but they came together for a friendly conference.

They sat down and talked it over and reached a decision with unexpected unanimity.

Conference is far more effective in settling disputes than controversy.

Controversy heats the blood and intensifies points of opposition, but conference cools passion and emphasizes points of agreement. In all our differences we should strive to come together to consider the matter.

Most family dissensions and church troubles and lawsuits and labor strikes and even wars could be peaceably settled if the opposing parties would come together and consider the matter, glance starward as the word means, and under the light of the upward look get a wider horizon and a broader common view. Is not the League of Nations together with its World Court an effort to come together and consider the great affairs and difficulties of the world?

Everything depends on the spirit in which the members of such a conference meet. If they come together to convict one another of wrong, they will not unite: but if they come together to agree on the truth and right, they will find a point of unity and peace.

3. The Council at Jerusalem

The delegates to this council set off from Antioch and traveled by land three hundred miles southward to Jerusalem, strengthening and cheering the brethren on the way. Arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church and they told the story of God's doings among the Gentiles.

They were again confronted with the demand of the Judaistic Christians that the Gentiles be circumcised and the law of Moses be imposed upon them.

The council then met and the different views were considered.

The substance of these speeches is recorded. Peter was the first speaker. He reviewed the circumstances of his own conversion to the

principle of liberty and protested against putting a yoke on the Gentiles that the Jews themselves would not bear.

A great silence fell on the council as Paul and Barnabas rose to speak. The exploits of these men had made them illustrious and they had come back as generals from a great victory. They told the story of their famous campaign and rehearsed the wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles.

Then James, the brother of Jesus and head of the church in Jerusalem, spoke. He was a sympathizer with, if not a supporter of, the Judaistic party (Gal. 2:2) and might have been expected to oppose Peter and Paul. But he took strong ground in favor of Gentile liberty and quoted from the prophets to prove his position.

The principle of universal salvation was in the Old Testament all the while, but the Jews did not see it until the light of the gospel fell on its pages and brought it out in luminous lines.

Thus the council brought these brethren into agreement and consolidated the church in the principle and policy of universal salvation with freedom from the ceremonial law of Moses.

The church was saved from provincialism and schism and a great victory was won that day; not violent controversy but brotherly conference did it.

In this council we see the beginning of general church government and it will be differently interpreted by different students. The Roman Catholic will see in it the First Ecumenical Council of his church and the Protestants are likely to see in it the first meeting of their general assembly or conference or association.

It was none of these in form, but it was all of them in principle or germ.

The church did not start out with any inspired form of government, but it developed forms and polities out of its own circumstances and needs as mollusks secrete their own shells.

And yet God was in the process and his Spirit inspired all good forms and ordinances of the church.

Any form of church government that has upon it the stamp of adaptation and efficiency is good and vindicates itself.

4. Decision of the Council

The decision of the council was embodied in a letter that has been preserved for us and is one of the most important documents in the history of Christianity. It is the Magna Charta of our right as Gentiles to share in the salvation of Christ without coming under the bondage of Mosaic ceremony.

The letter consists of an introduction, giving the history of the matter, and a resolution or exhortation stating the decision.

It first addresses the Gentiles as brethren, and this is in itself a notable fact and victory. It took the Jews a long time to come to the point of calling the Gentiles brethren, but they at last learned this lesson.

When we sincerely view others as brethren we shall not be long separated from them, and this spirit will in itself go far towards healing our differences and binding us into unity.

The letter repudiates the troublers that had subverted men's souls. These heresy-hunters turned out to be busybodies that had gone out of their way on their own account and out of their own church or parish in order to disturb others, and church troubles to this day are often caused by people that take it upon themselves to stir up matters that they should let alone.

Next, the letter strongly commends "our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus." These were the men that the Judaizers were striking at, and here is their complete vindication.

Finally, in the name of the Holy Spirit the letter lays upon the Gentiles no unnecessary burden, but bids them abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from things strangled, and from fornication.

There are here some elements of compromise.

While the Gentiles were released from the ceremonial laws of Moses they were yet to have regard for the prejudices and feelings of the Jews and were not to wantonly offend them in their social practices. These ceremonial prohibitions were not things wrong in themselves, but the Judaizing Christians thought them wrong, and this was reason enough why the Gentiles should abstain from them.

In settling difficulties in brotherly conference, we must not expect to have everything our way, but should be willing to concede something and meet others halfway on common ground.

But the grand point about this compromise and settlement was that there was no division of the church, neither party sought to exclude the other as though they could not live and work together, but room was found for both, and the unity of the church was maintained.

Had all divisive issues in the history of the church been handled by the method and in the spirit of this first serious controversy, many an unhappy division might have been avoided and Christianity would be more united and stronger to-day.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. At what point in this history did Paul write his letter to the Galatians?
2. How far can we go along the line of expediency and charity in settling disputes in the church and out of it?
3. What are the dangers connected with religious controversies?
4. Can all Christians be of one mind on doctrinal matters?
5. Was the moral law of Moses relaxed for Christians?

LESSON VIII—AUGUST 19

Paul Carries the Gospel into Europe

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Pioneering in Europe.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul's Call to Europe.

Golden Text: Come over into Macedonia, and help us. Acts 16:9.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 60:1–6.

Lesson Passage: Acts 15:36–16:15.

Lesson Text: Acts 16:9–15

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a *Roman* colony: and we were in this city tarrying certain days.

13 And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Vision in the Night.

2. Obedience to the Vision.

3. A Prayer Meeting by a River Side.

4. A Certain Woman.

From the council at Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and after some days determined to set out on a second missionary journey and visit the cities where they had founded churches on the first journey.

At this point the trouble about Mark's turning back in the first journey (13:13) caused a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas, who was the uncle of Mark, wanting to take him along, and Paul refusing to agree to this.

The result was that Barnabas and Paul separated. Barnabas took Mark and started for Cyprus, and Paul, taking Silas as his traveling companion, struck around the sea by land and visited his churches, starting in at Derbe.

The quarrel was due to human infirmity and fault, but it was overruled for good as two foreign mission expeditions instead of one set out and swept wider incursions into pagan territory.

After visiting his churches in Galatia, Paul's first plan was to pass directly west towards the populous cities on the coast, but the Holy Spirit said no. Next he turned northward, but again the Spirit interposed a barrier and shut him off from that field. Only one other road remained open to him and he went down to the coast at Troas and looked out over the Ægean Sea.

Here we see Providence at work.

The Holy Spirit was the Guide, though doubtless intermediate means were used. These means are not indicated, but they may have been illness or difficulties in the way of travel, or such circumstances as hedge our way and direct our goings. The Lord uses signboards for our guidance and the obedient soul becomes expert at reading their directions and is always led in a plain path.

When God shuts us off from one work, he has some other service waiting for us, and his path, however shut in and narrow it may seem, may lead us out into a large place.

Paul was shut out of these mountain valleys in the small country of Asia Minor that he might be let loose in Europe!

1. A Vision in the Night

At Troas a vision swept down upon Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood beseeching him with the cry, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Where Paul's journey seemed to have ended in night it suddenly blossomed out into a splendid vision; and where our path runs into darkness we may find the clearest guidance and widest enlargement.

Visions are still hovering around us to catch our attention and coax and woo us into a larger world and richer life.

Any idea or ideal luring and leading us to larger and lovelier things and loftier attainments, any call to duty and opening into service is a vision burning in our sky.

This world swarms with such visions.

It is not simply a globe of rock or ball of mud in which we wallow, but it is carpeted with green grass, swathed in blue sky and overarched with stars. Man is the upward-looking animal, as the old Greek name means, and he sees infinitely more when he looks up than when he looks down; for when we look down we may see only dust and dirt, but when we look up we see the eternal stars and the splendid thoughts of God.

This Macedonian was a representative man and his call was the pathetic cry of the heathen world. The Holy Spirit is out there in the darkness and is moving many hearts to cry for help.

This man is still calling, only he has now moved on and stands on the shores of India and Africa.

The church that cannot hear this man is so deaf that it is near spiritual death.

The call to help others is one mark of a heavenly vision.

Earthly visions lure us on to wealth and pleasure and worldly splendor and thus urge us to help ourselves, but the vision born of the Spirit of God calls us to help others, not only those near by, but also those afar off, even beyond the sea.

Trust such a vision: it is born of some better thing than human selfishness and sweeps down upon us out of the sky.

2. Obedience to the Vision

Paul trusted and obeyed. "And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them."

Notice the change from "they" to "we," for here Luke joins the company and steps into the story as the traveling companion of Paul and writer of the narrative.

"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19) was Paul's testimony of a former vision, and such obedience with him had grown into an unconscious habit.

When Paul knew the Lord's way his conscience and will did not hesitate or delay or debate about it, but instantly acted and turned his vision into verity. There was no gap between his conscience and his conduct, but the two coincided and flowed together in the same channel.

This instinctive habit of obedience to divine impulses consolidated Paul's conscience into unbroken unity and gave him masterful decision and power.

The reason we do not see more visions may be that we do not obey the ones we do see. Every vision disobeyed blinds us to the next one.

So Paul and his three companions, Silas and Timothy and Luke, sailed from Troas across the Ægean Sea to Neapolis and passed on to Philippi, an important Roman city of Macedonia.

In crossing this arm of the sea these travelers crossed a more momentous Rubicon than Cæsar ever saw.

This sail of a few hours marks one of the greatest crossings and epochs of history. In passing from Troas to Philippi the gospel stepped at one stride from Asia into Europe and set out upon its world-wide march. A new continent was here added to the kingdom of Christ, the star of spiritual empire here started westward and then kept moving on until it has now encircled the globe.

When he set out under divine providence following heavenly visions, we never know into what unexpected enlargement we may be led and what splendid results we may achieve.

3. A Prayer Meeting by a River Side

The gospel seed was now transplanted from Asia to Europe and immediately it begins to grow, for it is adapted to every climate and soil.

The narrative speaks of the missionaries tarrying certain days—unimportant days that are simply huddled together under a general designation—and hurries on to a special day that shines out upon the page like a star, that never-to-be-forgotten "Sabbath" when "we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer."

The heathen world did not know this day, but these humble missionaries knew it and they knew how to spend it; and they spent it, not in sight-seeing or pleasure seeking or lazy lounging, but in attending a place of worship.

Many among us do not know what to do with this day. To them it may be a day of emptiness and weariness, or a day of business or pleasure, a day that dissipates strength rather than renews it, that frets life rather than frees it.

But to those that know its secret and use it aright, it is a divine day in the calendar that brings rest and worship and peace and breathes a better spirit through all our days.

These men in entering this city found a place of worship. What a man finds in a city quickly reveals what he is, for every man goes to his own place. The young man that goes to a city and finds a low resort is traveling a different road from the one that finds a church and a prayer meeting. The missionaries did not know where the place of worship was, but they soon found it. They had a spiritual scent that led them to the right place.

If we really want to go to church we shall surely be able to find the place and to get there in time.

When the missionaries sat down they found themselves in a congregation of women, which is not unlike the experience of many a modern pastor.

Where were the men that they were not at this prayer meeting? And where are the men to-day, that they are not at our prayer meetings?

Business is no excuse. Worship is business and the main business that helps all other business and ought to be attended to first.

Does any one utter the sneer that the church is made up of women? If this were true, and it is not, would it be any discredit to the church? Men support evil resorts: is this any honor to them? A public place that women never enter is no fit place for a man to be. Women do attend church: this is an honor to the church; and the man that thinks to insult the church with this sneer probably insults his own mother.

It is the glory of the church that it has woman's support, and her hand is everywhere holding up its banner and bearing it on around the world.

4. A Certain Woman

The narrative now singles out " a certain woman " whose interesting story is told. Lydia has the conspicuous honor of being the first Christian convert in Europe, and thus " the man of Macedonia " turns out to be a woman.

The gospel in heathen lands generally first finds its way into woman's heart, and the cause that wins woman to its support will eventually conquer the world.

Lydia was " a seller of purple," a business woman and shopkeeper who was earning her own living, and this fact shines out as a crown on her brow.

She was a producer and not a mere consumer and parasite in society, and was making the world richer by her presence.

It is better to sell purple for a living than to wear it in idle luxury. Woman is now crowding into business along many lines, and she has a right to do whatever her nature fits her and her duties permit her to do.

Next, Lydia "worshiped God"; she was not only a worker, but also a worshiper; she was not so busy that she could not go to prayer meeting. Her business did not crowd out her religion, and her religion did not unfit her for business, but the two worked together and helped each other.

This is the true relation of religion and business: not antagonistic, but complementary; in fact, work and worship should fuse into one life.

A man's business should be his religion, and his religion should be his business. This spiritualizes business and practicalizes religion and turns all life into the glory of God.

Lydia was religious, but she was not yet a Christian; one thing was lacking and she found this in Christ.

The beautiful steps of her conversion are linked together like loops of gold. First, she " heard " the gospel. We must first hear the truth, and if we stop our ears with worldliness we thereby shut ourselves out of the kingdom.

Next, " the Lord opened " her heart; the Spirit of God intervened and inserted a divine link in this chain.

Then she gave "heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul." Her faith now flowed into fact, and "she was baptized." She did not begin to pick and choose among the commandments and ordinances, but she obeyed them all.

Then "her household" was baptized, grace widened its borders and took in her whole family.

Finally, she invited the missionaries home to dinner, her new faith flowered out into the beautiful grace of hospitality, and her conversion was complete.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we know when Providence is guiding us?
2. Name some of the great visions that have come to men.
3. How can we turn visions into victories?
4. What is one trouble with our business to-day?
5. What are the steps in a normal conversion?

LESSON IX—AUGUST 26

Paul in a Roman Prison

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Source of Paul's Joy.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul as an Evangelist.

Golden Text: Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice. Phil. 4:4.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:6–13.

Lesson Passage: Acts 16:16–40.

Lesson Text: Acts 16:19–34

19 But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they laid hold on Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the market place before the rulers,

20 And when they had brought them unto the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 And brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.

32 And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately.

34 And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Missionaries Mobbed and Jailed.

2. A Midnight Prayer Meeting.

3. An Earthquake.
4. A Great Question.
5. A Short Answer.

The first European convert was a woman and the second was a man; the first was a storekeeper and the second was a jailer.

The gospel reaches up and down and through society in every direction and is no respecter of persons.

The first conversion occurred in a quiet prayer meeting on a river bank, and the second grew out of a mob and took place in a jail amidst the cracking walls and the shocks and shouts of an earthquake. The gospel works under all conditions and tells its message in sanctuary or street, and knows no difference between the iron-barred windows and stone walls of a prison and the richly-stained glass and softly-carpeted aisles and cushioned seats of a church or a stately cathedral.

The gospel of Christ could not invade Europe without meeting opposition, and the battle is now on.

1. The Missionaries Mobbed and Jailed

The peace of the river side prayer meeting was soon succeeded by the fury of a mob. As Paul and his companions passed to and fro between their lodgings and "the place of prayer," they were followed by a fortune-telling slave girl, who was possessed of an evil spirit and kept crying out that the men were servants of the most high God which showed the way of salvation.

Paul took pity on her and commanded the spirit to come out of the unhappy creature, and, leaving her in her right mind, doubtless passed on with a heart full of joy.

But the slave girl belonged to owners that took a different view of the case from that of Paul. The revenue they derived from her fortune-telling made her a productive property, and this profit was now gone and their property had suddenly lost its value.

Her gain was their loss; she had regained her mind, but they had lost their money, and with them her soul weighed nothing against their greed.

These men had hitherto taken no interest in the missionaries and had let them pass to their praying and preaching unmolested. But now that these preachers had interfered with business and cut off profits, it was high time to take them in hand, and this was done with a vengeance.

The owners seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the magistrates and, without mentioning the good they had really done, brought against them an artful and damaging charge. They were "Jews," which was almost a crime in itself, and they "do exceedingly trouble our city," which was bad for business, "and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans," which raised the fear of Roman judgment. The simple statement of such a charge was enough.

It most cunningly combined business and politics in a way that obviously demonstrated that these itinerant preachers were a menace to both profits and patriotism, and when profits and cheap patriotism can shout with one voice against a man, the outlook for him is bad.

The people of Philippi took this view of the situation and instantly they became a mob. The magistrates, in violation of Roman law that had been quoted against the prisoners, had them stripped and beaten on the spot, and then they were hurried off to jail and were soon in the inner prison with their feet fast in the stocks.

The world will stand for preachers and the church as long as they go off into a quiet place and preach and pray by themselves; such worship may go on indefinitely and "no one durst molest us or make us afraid." But when preachers and Christian citizens come out of the church and begin to close saloons and demand justice and stop law-breaking and rebuke sin in high places and cast out devils generally, the world will suddenly get after them, and Christian reformers will be attacked and some of them may go to jail.

Worldly interests may take little notice of religion until it ventures on their ground and then they wake up and warn it off. The world is not afraid of Christianity at worship, but it stands ready to fight Christianity at work.

2. A Midnight Prayer Meeting

At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners heard them.

This is the strangest prayer meeting on record.

The prison was dark and damp and infested with vermin, the apostles were forced into cramped positions with their feet fast in the stocks, sleep was impossible—What could they do? They could pray, making known their desires unto God and receiving calmness and courage from him.

No prison can stop prayer, or circumstances can shut us off from God.

However the outward man may be burdened and bound, the inward man is free to fly to the throne of grace and obtain help in time of need. Not only were the apostles praying, but they were also singing hymns unto God. Their hearts were full of joy and burst into song. David's psalms, many of them born of trouble and yet breathing triumphant faith and joy, were familiar to them and would express their praise "Thou hast set me at large when I was in distress." "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than they have when their grain and their new wine are increased."

"And the prisoners were listening to them."

A fine instance of unconscious influence.

These praying apostles did not know that their prayers and hymns were stealing through the corridors into the ears of other prisoners.

No one knows how far his unconscious influence goes.

It runs far beyond his intentional plans and purposes into an unseen region where it reaches many others and helps them to shape their lives and yet he knows it not. This immensely widens the responsibility and the power of our lives for both good and evil.

In offering prayer or doing the slightest good deed we may be helping somebody over a hard place unknown to us; or by a careless word or act we may hurt others and know it not.

3. An Earthquake

The midnight prayer meeting was interrupted by an unexpec ed but, in that region, a not uncommon occurrence. An earthquake shook the rocky ribs of the earth, disrupted the foundations of the prison,

cracked its walls, wrenched open its iron doors, and tore loose the prisoners' bolts and chains, setting them free.

The jailer awoke in the midst of the shocks and shouts, and, seeing the cell doors standing open, was seized with the fear that the prisoners had escaped. Instantly he whipped out his sword to thrust it through himself, for he knew that he would have to answer for his prisoners with his life.

Quick as a flash Paul cried out, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." The word was spoken just in the nick of time, the sword dropped, and the jailer's life was saved.

"Do thyself no harm!"

This forbids suicide under all circumstances.

Life is God's gift and we have no right to take it away. He has stationed us at our post of duty, and, however we may be hemmed around and pierced through with distress and agony, we ought bravely to bear the burden all the days of our appointed time till our change come.

But there are other ways of taking our life than by the sword.

Every sin is a sword that severs some tender thread in the tissues of the soul. There are coarse sins of the flesh that cut and slash the very body to pieces, and others more subtle that injure more delicate elements of our complex personality.

All sin is suicide.

4. A Great Question

Then the jailer called for lights and sprang in and, trembling with fear, fell down before Paul and Silas and brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

This is the greatest question of this world, the question that, being answered, will answer all others.

It is an old question, for the greatest things in the world are old things, yet it is ever new. It was born when the first human sin was committed and it will not be silenced until the last sin is healed.

Many of the questions of the day that fill the newspapers and are the sensation and talk of the hour, compared with this question, are as the flash of a meteor compared with the eternal burning of a star.

Pitifully blind is the man that is busy and excited with the little questions of the world and the passing events of the hour and has never stopped to ask what he must do to be saved.

This is no speculative or trivial question, but one that at the moment of its utterance crowded out every other thought.

It is the cry of a lost man.

Why did the jailer tremble with fear? Not on account of the earthquake or of escaped prisoners, for these dangers were past. At first he did fear the judgment of Cæsar, and then, this danger being gone, he saw farther than the bar of Rome and feared the judgment of God.

Conscience shook his soul and blanched his face.

Every man is lost in sin, and no unbelief or indifference or worldliness will change this fact into a false alarm.

And this is a practical question, implying that something must be done about sin, and it is a sharply personal question, requiring each one to do something for himself.

What brought this jailer to this great conviction and cry? The earthquake. Probably he went to sleep that night without offering a prayer; God was not in all his thoughts. But the rocking earth and falling walls woke the sleeping man and then the sleeping conscience in the man and brought him to a sense of his sin and danger.

God is in the earthquake that shakes our lives.

The meaning of some disaster that befalls us may be that we are sleeping in sin, and God is rocking all things around us to wake us into life. Many a man dates his new birth from an earthquake.

Blessed are loss and sorrow when they rouse us from indifference and worldliness and turn us to things that cannot be shaken.

5. A Short Answer

Paul, who could always say just the right thing at the right time and never wasted a word, instantly answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."

Never was the gospel put more pointedly and compactly and thrillingly.

It was a shot that exactly hit the mark. It saved the man and gave a short answer to this great question for all time.

It told the Roman jailer that he could be saved. It did not tell him that he was a heathen man and outside the covenant of grace, or a wicked man and there was no hope for him, but instantly as though the Roman were a Jew and the jailer a good man, it told him he could be saved and how he could be saved.

The jailer believed and immediately the promise was fulfilled. Faith rushed into fact.

The jailer was baptized and thereby entered upon full obedience. Grace widened its borders and the whole household believed and were baptized. The family, so to speak, were thrown in extra.

The jailer now dressed the missionaries' wounds, took them into his house and set food before them; and the conversion that started in the madness of a mob and was precipitated by an earthquake ended in gracious hospitality and exuberant joy.

All are not converted in the same way. The quiet conversion of Lydia was immediately followed by the earthquake conversion of the Roman jailer. The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How often has Paul so far in his missionary work been mobbed?
2. Is fear a proper motive in conversion?
3. Is an earthquake a providence of God?
4. What is conversion?
5. What are some different types of conversion?

LESSON X—SEPTEMBER 2

Paul in Thessalonica

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul's Use of the Scriptures.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul, Organizer of Churches.

Golden Text: The opening of thy words giveth light. Psalm 119:130.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:9–16.

Lesson Passage: Acts 17:1–15; Rom. 15:18–20; I Thess. 5:12–23.

Lesson Text: Acts 17:1–12

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

2 And Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures,

3 Opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, *said he,* I proclaim unto you, is the Christ.

4 And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

5 But the Jews, being moved with jealously, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city on an uproar; and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

8 And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berœa: who when they were come thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.

12 Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. In Thessalonica.

2. Some Believed.

3. And Some Believed Not.

4. False Charges.

5. The Noble Bereans.

Did their rough treatment in Philippi lead Paul and Silas to think they had had enough of Europe and turn them back to Asia? No, they still kept their faces westward and the first day's journey carried them thirty miles farther into Europe and the second another thirty, and so on until they reached Thessalonica, one hundred miles from Philippi.

This town under its modern name of Salonica still stands a considerable city at the head of its gulf, and it was an important point where a large army was encamped during the Great War.

These soldiers of the cross no more thought of turning back than did Cæsar's legions and, instead of retreating, penetrated deeper into this hostile country and seized a larger and more strategic city.

They had gotten the gospel wedge inserted into Europe and now they continued to drive it in until it split the continent and empire wide open.

These wounded weary Jews, creeping along the roads of the empire, were a mightier force than Cæsar on his throne.

1. In Thessalonica

All the way from Philippi to Thessalonica the travelers were alert for some new opening and they passed through town after town before they found a suitable opportunity; and then Paul, as his custom was, went into a synagogue and preached to the Jews for three Sabbath days.

Paul's piety was systematic and his worship had grown into an unconscious habit.

It was not a matter of convenience or feeling or taste with him whether he would go to church or not, but he went "as his custom was."

Some people go to church according to the weather or their wardrobe, but we ought to go according to the almanac and the clock.

Habit eliminates hesitation and debate from life and reduces it to regularity and certainty.

Paul not only went into the synagogue, but he also took part in the service and had something to say. He did not rant, but he reasoned, for the gospel is a rational system of truth that can never dispense with

clear and logical thought. Yet Paul's reasoning was not mere speculation spun out of his head, but was based on truth drawn from the Scriptures.

The true preacher or teacher is not simply uttering his own opinions and thereby adding to the religious confusion of the world, but he has a commission that marks out his message and he speaks by the Book.

Paul reasoned from the Scriptures, "opening and alleging that it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ."

Two fundamental doctrines were thus preached and pressed upon these Jews, the atonement and the resurrection of Christ.

Paul had a firm grasp on the necessity of the atonement. It was not an accident in the life of Jesus but an integral part of his work, and "it behooved him to suffer," so that it was vital to the whole plan and efficacy of the gospel.

Christ not only needed to suffer but also to rise from the dead, and Paul always preached the risen Christ and declared that if this resurrection were a myth, then Christian faith and preaching were in vain.

We ruin and wreck the gospel when we deny or smooth down and quietly eliminate either the atonement or the resurrection of Christ.

It was a great gospel Paul preached, no rose-water but a blood-red religion, even the power of God unto salvation, and it is this same gospel that is committed unto us.

If we ever remove these two foundation stones the whole structure will fall into ruin.

2. Some Believed

What was the result of the sermon? "Some of them were persuaded." Jewish prejudice and pride, powerful influences with them as they are with us, did not encase their minds against new truth; worldliness did not make them listless and indifferent; doubt did not keep them out of belief, and fear did not drive them into it; but they were persuaded; they let their minds receive the truth and their wills obey it.

This is the highest power of the soul and at this point of deciding our beliefs we shape our conduct and character and determine destiny.

Having believed, they "consorted with Paul and Silas," they cast in their lots with them, as the word means. They came out into the open with their Christian faith and expressed it in public fact and fellowship. They were not ashamed of their company and took their chances with them in a hostile city.

They cast all they had into the Christian life and staked everything upon it.

This must have broken some precious ties, cost them some business losses, and subjected them to much ridicule and scorn, but they had the courage of their conversion and were bravely true to the missionaries and to Christ.

Paul never forgot their faithfulness to him, and in writing to them soon afterwards in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians he says, "Ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word with much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (1:6).

Mention is also made of a multitude of believing Greeks and of "the chief women not a few."

The gospel was now breaking down all distinctions between Jew and Gentile and melting all men into one brotherhood.

Woman was given an equal place in the kingdom with man and there she stands to this day.

Wonderful was the solvent power of the gospel in that ancient, hard-crusted world, and it still has this power in our modern world.

3. And Some Believed Not

Some believed, but some believed not, is the honest record of the result of preaching the gospel in this city, and this has been its record wherever it is preached.

The human will has sovereign powers and may thrust its resistance against the holiest truth of God.

There were Jews in the Thessalonian synagogue that believed not, and we are given a view of their motive and methods. They were moved

with envy or jealousy; they saw the superior gifts of Paul and they feared that power was about to slip out of their hands, and they would brook no opposition and rivalry.

Their unbelief was not openminded and honest, but it was insincere, ignoble and mean.

There may be and is honest religious doubt, but much scepticism has a poisoned root: it openly or secretly feeds on selfishness or pride or worldliness or some form of sin.

No unbelief can oppose the spirit of Christ, which is the essence of Christianity, and be sincere.

Some of the prejudice against the church is due to the fact that its members are mostly well-to-do, and the root of such unbelief is jealousy.

The method of these unbelieving Jews was as mean as their motive.

They "took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble," men that they would have scorned to recognize under other circumstances, but now they received them as bosom friends. Persecution, like politics, makes strange bedfellows. Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with after it has been given a bad name, and any disreputable fellow was a good enough tool for these Jews to use against Jesus.

They gathered these vile fellows into a crowd and set the city in an uproar.

Persecution and passion respect no rights, but break down the last safeguards of liberty and life.

Such lawlessness is growing in our country and is one of the most alarming symptoms in our civic life.

4. False Charges

The mob did not succeed in finding Paul and Silas, but they seized Jason and certain brethren and dragged them before the magistrates and presented charges against them.

Their first charge was, "These that turned the world upside down are come hither also." In so far as this meant that the new faith undermined social order and institutions, it was false, but in a deeper sense than they knew it hit the truth and was one of those unconscious testimonies that sometimes slip out of the mouths of enemies.

The gospel does turn the world upside down, because it is wrong side up and needs to be turned.

The material and the temporal are now on top, and the spiritual and eternal are underneath. Passion and pride exalt themselves, and purity and peace are trampled under foot. "Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne." The flesh rules the spirit, and the devil rules the flesh.

Christ came to change all this and put everything in its right place.

When reason rules the mind and conscience controls the life and Christ sits on the throne, then the world will be right side up.

Another of their charges was that "these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." This also was false in form, but true in spirit.

It was false that Christians were political traitors, but it was true that "there is another king, one Jesus."

The world needs "another king," for the kings of this world have made sorry work of their business. "One Jesus" now shines the master of the spiritual world, and more and more will his kingdom widen and deepen until the kingdoms of this world are his.

With such charges as these, artfully false in form, yet unconsciously hiding deep truths, did they trouble the people and the rulers, for the gospel at first often brings not peace but a sword.

But after the storm there are bluer skies and greener grass, and after the sword of the gospel there are deeper peace and a better world.

5. The Noble Bereans

Mob rule ends reason, and it was no use to stay longer in Thessalonica, and so the missionaries moved on towards the west.

Persecution could not stay the gospel, but only drove it on toward Rome.

Sixty miles farther west was Berea, where was a synagogue, and we might have thought that Paul would shun it as he would a pesthouse.

Had he not had enough synagogues?

Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, were not these enough? No, when he came to Berea he "went into the synagogue of the Jews." The synagogue was his first battleground, and, though it cost him many a stoning, yet the sight of one always stirred the war spirit in him and he put his armor on for another fight.

His experience at Berea, however, was a pleasant surprise.

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so."

Deeper than our acts is that nature or disposition out of which all these streams flow, and happy is the man that has a noble nature.

These Bereans were not fickle and blown about by every wind of new doctrine and they took no man's word for truth, but investigated for themselves whether things were so. Second-hand opinions did not count with them; they would trust only first-hand truth.

The battle with them was not between the old and the new, but between the false and the true.

We are not surprised, then, to read that "many of them therefore believed." There was logic in their faith, and such faith is strong and fruitful in life. Their minds were not blinded by bigotry or crystallized in conservatism, but were transparent to truth from whatever quarter it came.

They were plastic to any new mold of truth they found, and this is ever a mark of a noble mind.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the geography of Macedonia.
2. Give other instances in which the Bible sets down damaging admissions in its narrative.
3. To what degree are we responsible for our beliefs?
4. To what extent are we to depend on scholars for our views of the Bible and of its teaching?
5. What are some other characteristics of a noble mind?

LESSON XI—SEPTEMBER 9

Paul in Athens and Corinth

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul as a Worker.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul, Preacher and Teacher.

Golden Text: The opening of thy words giveth light. Psalm 119:130.

Devotional Reading: I Corinthians 13:4–13.

Lesson Passage: Acts 17:16–18:17; I Cor. 2:1–16; I Tim. 2:3–7.

Lesson Text: Acts 18:1–11; I Tim. 2:3–7

1 After these things he departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them;

3 And because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tentmakers.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

7 And he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he dwelt *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, *himself* man, Christ Jesus,

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony *to be borne* in its own times;

7 Whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Paul the Tentmaker.

2. Reasoning in the Synagogue.

3. The Usual Opposition.

4. The Converts in Corinth.

5. Paul Despondent.

Fifty miles westward of Athens on a narrow isthmus stood Corinth, the second famous city of Greece. Though it never rivaled Athens in intellectual development and brilliance, it approached it in art and surpassed it in commerce and wealth. It was a city of magnificent buildings and its Acrocorinthus was crowned with a splendid temple of Venus that matched the Parthenon, which was visible in the distance on the Acropolis of Athens.

Its heterogeneous population, containing adventurers from every country and dregs drained from the slums of other cities, and its wealth and luxury made it a hotbed of corruption in which every kind of profligacy grew riotously and shameless orgies attended its pagan worship.

Corinth shows us the failure of mere material development.

A magnificent material civilization may be the outgrowth of intellectual and moral life, but it may also be the richly-embroidered robe of death, as light may be the steady splendor that shoots from the blazing surface of the sun, or the phosphorescent gleams that play among the ashes of decay.

Into this pleasure-seeking, sin-saturated city came Paul the missionary, bringing the gospel of purity and peace, and here he abode and labored for a year and a half.

1. Paul the Tentmaker

Being an utter stranger in the city, Paul sought out some of his countrymen and found lodging with a family consisting of the husband and wife, Aquila and Priscilla, who had lately been expelled from Rome by an edict of the Emperor Claudius.

As this edict was issued early in 50 A. D., we have in this event a fact that gives us a definite date in the life of Paul.

This husband and wife not only became Christians, but also became associated with Paul and went on with his work when he left Corinth. They were tentmakers, and as Paul had learned this trade in Tarsus, he worked with them and thus earned his own living.

Every Jew was required by rabbinical law to teach his son a trade, and hence Paul's skill in this craft. This was not the only place he thus supported himself and everywhere he paid his way.

These early preachers received no calls to rich churches at large salaries, but went at their own charges.

Many a time Paul worked far into the night that he might preach by day. These men had no mercenary motives in their work, and this imparts disinterested truthfulness and certainty to their testimony to the gospel.

Knowledge of a trade is still a useful thing to a minister.

It is a valuable kind of education and it practicalizes the preacher as nothing else can do. It puts him in touch with men and enables him to understand and handle the practical matters of life. And it is still a good thing to fall back upon so that, if the preacher finds himself without support from a pulpit, he can grasp a plane or a plough.

Paul did not find tentmaking and gospel-preaching inconsistent, and work and worship still go together and are deeply akin and help each other.

Every man and woman should know something useful and do it.

Labor is an honor and a safeguard to a man, and idleness, however spent in luxury, is a shame and a temptation.

The youth that learns some hand craft acquires a practical education and capital that he can never lose and that will yield him dividends through life.

2. Reasoning in the Synagogue

Tentmaking, however, was only an avocation with Paul, and preaching the gospel was his vocation. "He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks." Literary criticism would readily discern that this sentence refers to Paul: it bears the marks of his work.

He was always a reasoner and never a ranter, laying hold of the solid facts and principles of the gospel and building them into a logical system.

He began in the synagogue and used it as a foundation on which to rear the gospel; and he persuaded Jews and Greeks, making no distinction and gathering all men into the kingdom of God.

So the skilful tentmaker was also the successful gospel-preacher, and this is a combination that every one in some degree should realize.

It is not necessary to enter a pulpit in order to preach; very often effective preaching is done out of the pulpit by those that are never thought of as preachers. The business man and the busy woman who are living gospels are all the while preaching and persuading in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Work and worship are thus fused into one life that reflects the glory of God.

Paul was presently rejoined by Silas and Timothy in Corinth, and then, being relieved of anxiety as to his Thessalonian converts, he was stimulated to greater activity in preaching and testified more earnestly that Jesus is the Christ. The presence of these companions was an inspiration to Paul; they were "helps" (I Cor. 12:28).

Some church officers and members are a damper and discouragement to the pastor: when he sees them coming his heart faints. Others are an encouragement and inspiration, and their presence cheers the pastor and sets everything moving with increased activity and earnestness.

3. The Usual Opposition

The usual opposition soon developed in the synagogue. Some of the Jews were so rabid and furious against Paul that they blasphemed. Their intense bigotry and pride would not stand for the gospel of the crucified Nazarene and they burst into blasphemy.

These Jews had the first chance at the grace of God, as the Jew has ever had, but they sinned it away.

Paul saw that his work among them was done and that it would result in no good but only harm for him to visit the synagogue again. Shaking out his raiment after the Oriental manner, he said, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." The Jews brought a great deal of blood upon themselves through their bigotry and blundering and have made their race the pity of history.

But the Jews are not the only people that bring their own blood upon themselves: every wrongdoer does this very thing.

Sin is every one's own act and always works towards his self-destruction. A man might as well let out some of his own blood as think a wrong thought or do an unrighteous deed.

" His blood be on us and our children," said the Jews in sending Christ to his cross, and this is what all those are saying that are rejecting him.

Paul was clean of their blood, and we would do well to examine our skirts and see that they are spotless of any brother's blood. Turning from the Jews Paul went to the Gentiles.

The gospel must go somewhere, and if we do not receive it, it will find others, and those that we despise may go into the kingdom of God before us.

4. The Converts in Corinth

Out of the synagogue Paul went into the adjoining house of Justus where he continued to preach. Blaspheming did not stop the gospel and never will: when it is shut out of one place it will always enter another.

Presently Paul began to gather converts.

One was Crispus, the ruler of the very synagogue out of which Paul was forced to go, who believed with all his house.

The head man was thus pulled out of the synagogue into the church, and this must have made a profound impression.

The work grew and many Corinthians believed and were baptized. A church was thus founded in Corinth which became important and figures largely in early church history.

Who were these people that formed this church?

Paul wrote two letters to this church, one from Ephesus and one from Macedonia, and these throw light into its membership. He writes unto them (I Cor. 6:9–11): " Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you."

This slimy catalogue shows what these converts had been and had come out of.

Some of them were in danger of sliding back into this mire and Paul was ever anxious and watchful in keeping them out of it. This was the kind of work the gospel did in these heathen hotbeds and cesspools of vice, and this same work it is still doing in great heathen lands and Christian cities.

It is taking some of the dirtiest rags and rottenest remnants of humanity and cleansing them into purity and peace.

No soul steeped and saturated in sin is too vile for the grace of God to wash it whiter than snow.

Christ has digged us all out of the pit and brought us up out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock and established our goings; and we should be ever thankful to him and praise his glorious name.

And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

5. Paul Despondent

At this point Paul appears to have fallen into fear and deep despondency. The dreadful wickedness of the city may have depressed him and he doubtless saw on the edge of the horizon the cloud of the coming storm. It was in such extremities that Paul received special divine manifestations and again the Lord appeared to him in a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace." Paul was brave as a lion, but the bravest man has hours of faintness and needs encouragement and inspiration.

Let us not be surprised when such hours overtake us, but endure the discouragement and listen for the divine voice that will cheer and strengthen us.

There is some vision and promise in the Word of God that will exactly match and master our situation.

Such a promise was vouchsafed unto Paul. "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to do thee harm: for I have much people in this city." "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

This assurance should ever be a rock under our feet.

Even when thunders roll and storms break, the eternal God is our refuge and strength and very present help in trouble.

If Paul feared harm at this time, his fear was groundless. Whatever man was plotting against him, God was round about him, and whoever would touch Paul would have to strike through God's omnipotence.

If Paul feared failure in that great wicked city, again he was mistaken, for God had already taken a census of his people and found them a multitude.

God sees things before they are done and counts his people before they are converted.

We need more of the imperial power of imagination and faith that overleaps all obstructions, anticipates the future, sees the angel in the rough block of marble, the man in the boy, and the saint in the sinner.

This faith keeps us at work in the most discouraging circumstances and out of the most unpromising materials brings marvelous results.

It is a comforting thought that in the great city rolling in wickedness, in the wide world lost in sin, the Father has many children we know not of, and he will at last bring them home.

Paul continued in Corinth a year and six months, teaching the word of God among its people.

He there also taught a vastly wider audience, for during this time he wrote two Epistles to the Thessalonians that to this day are read and studied around the world and are sowing the gospel seed on every shore.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are cities strategic centers for spreading any movement and message?
2. What is it to reason?
3. Why does the gospel so often excite opposition?
4. Can we get visions, or must we wait for them to come to us?
5. What is the greatest vision in the world?

LESSON XII—SEPTEMBER 16

Paul Writes to His Friends in Corinth

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul Urges Team Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul Pleads for Christian Unity.

Golden Text: Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Psalm 133:1.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 4:1–6.

Lesson Passage: I Corinthians 1–4.

Lesson Text: I Corinthians 1:10–13; 3:5 11, 21–23

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11 For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them *that are of the household* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?

5 What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him.

6 I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

9 For we are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

21 Wherefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours;

22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *The Ideal of Unity.*
2. *Party Divisions.*
3. *Fellow-Workers with God.*
4. *The One Foundation.*
5. *All Things Are Ours.*

Paul returned from his second missionary journey by way of Jerusalem to the home base in Antioch and then set out on his third journey, passing again through Galatia, visiting his first churches and going on to Ephesus where he remained three years.

While in Ephesus he received reports of an unhappy state of affairs in the church in Corinth, party divisions and strifes and laxity in morals, and he wrote them this letter of correction and advice. It appears from chapter 5:9 that he had written an earlier letter to the same church, which has been lost.

No doubt he wrote many letters that were not preserved, and the thirteen Epistles of his we have in the New Testament are only a selection out of a much larger number.

1. The Ideal of Unity

The ideal of the Christian life is that we "be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Unity of mind is a fundamental necessity of coöperation and fellowship in any field of thought and service.

How can two walk together unless they are agreed? Unity in the marriage bond, unity in the home, unity in a business firm, unity in a political party, these are obviously necessary to permanence and success in these relations.

It is in logical line with this principle that we must have unity of mind in religion.

If we do not agree on the existence and personality of God, on the Lordship and Saviourhood of Christ, on the Bible as a divine revelation, it is evident that while we may be good friends we cannot hold the same creed and work together in the same church.

Yet unity does not mean identity but variety in harmony.

The kingdom of life has a deep unity and yet into what myriad forms it breaks? Light has a fundamental unity and yet it is composed of all the colors blended into white.

The Bible itself is a book of the greatest variety and yet of fundamental unity.

It has sixty-six books written in different ages by different minds and yet through it one increasing purpose runs. There are four Gospels and each one tells the story of the life of Jesus from its own point of view and rarely do they coincide in their words and yet they are a harmonious composite picture of Christ.

It is not psychologically possible that any two minds should have the same identical idea, for they see it from different angles and each one through its own knowledge and experience, and these differences will enter into the fabric of the idea itself.

We are not, then, to think that we all must or can squeeze our minds into the same mold and think alike in religion or even about our own church and creed. Much less should we think that other people should force their minds into our molds or conform to our ideas in their views.

Unity of principle there must be, but the same principle may be unfolded into an infinite wealth and variety of forms.

2. Party Divisions

This ideal unity of "the same mind" was broken in the Corinthian church into "contentions" or party divisions and strifes. Paul learned of this through some members of the family of Chloe who probably had come to Ephesus from Corinth and reported the unhappy state of affairs that had arisen after Paul's departure.

Four parties had sprung up among them, some saying they were followers of Paul, and others of Apollos, and others of Peter, and still others that they were in a peculiar sense the followers of Christ.

Party spirit always ran high among the Greeks, especially in politics and sports, and the same divisive spirit now split them into factions in their religion and church.

The fact that they differed was not the serious thing, for such difference may be a sign of intellectual and spiritual life, but the fatal thing was that they differed in a contentious spirit. They fell apart into quarreling factions and each party opposed the others and they all wrangled and grew bitter in a way that was unseemly and destructive of Christian unity and life.

Such a spirit of contentious disunity has not yet died out of the Christian church and has disturbed and divided it all down through the centuries.

Of course such divisions are not peculiar to the church and are equally found in all fields of human coöperation and they result in great national and international controversies and in war itself.

Yet they are peculiarly unhappy and ruinous in the Christian life and church where we are theoretically all one body in Christ and members one of another.

The causes of such divisions and strifes are found in the common infirmities of human nature.

We see things differently and then we are much inclined to think that ours is the only true way and that in so far as others differ from us they are willfully wrong and in danger of the judgment, or at least of our censure, or, worse still, of our pity and contempt. Pride of opinion, love of leadership, putting undue emphasis on orthodoxy of creed rather than on character and conduct, a factious contentious spirit, an egoistic disposition, selfishness, the general sinfulness of human nature, these are causes of division and strife.

Men do not usually acknowledge such roots of contention in themselves and may think they are doing God service, but these lie deep in human nature and work more or less unconsciously.

We need to be on our guard against them and not be so intent on charging causes of contention on others as in finding them in ourselves.

3. Fellow-Workers with God

Paul, while he himself was acclaimed by one party in the Corinthian church as their leader, yet laid the axe at the root of such party divisions by pointing out that such leaders are nothing in themselves and are only fellow-workers with God. "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

Apollos was a cultured Alexandrian Jewish Christian convert who is described as "an eloquent man" and "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 28:24), who followed Paul at Corinth, watering the seeds Paul had planted, and captivating certain members of the church by his fluent speech.

Divisions not infrequently arise in our churches over pastors or ministers with different gifts.

There appears to have been no jealousy or friction of any kind between Paul and Apollos, and Paul states the true relation they sustained to each other. "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Different workers and people with different gifts all have their proper place in the church and are needed each in his own work.

No jealousy or friction of any kind should divide them, but each should contribute his part in harmony with all other workers. They are like the workers on a farm or in a factory where division of labor assigns to each individual or group a special part of the work, and then all together produce the output of the farm or the factory. How important is teamwork in sport? What game can be won without it? Even so is it in the church.

But there is one Worker back of all these human workers whether on the farm or in the factory or in the church, who is working in and through them and is the efficient cause of all their efficiency: God. "For we are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building."

God and man are working together in all the fields of life.

On the farm man ploughs the soil and sows the seed and God creates the soil and the seed and sends the shower and the sunshine that quicken the seed and cause the field to wave with golden grain or rustle with corn. Take either worker out of this process and it all stops and no harvest will be gathered. Soil and seed without the plough and planting, or ploughing and planting without the shower and the sun will produce no grain of wheat.

Just so is it in the spiritual field. The human mind must be instructed and sown with the seed of truth and the Holy Spirit must breathe upon the mind and heart, and then the seed will sprout and grow and there will be a harvest of the fruits of the Spirit.

4. The One Foundation

Paul had "laid a foundation" in Corinth, "and another buildeth thereon." Apollos had followed him and built on the foundation Paul had laid, and we are all doing this.

Always is it true that other men labored and we are entered into their labors.

Former generations have laid vast material and intellectual and spiritual foundations on which we are building. If we all had to start at the beginning again and work out our own language and learning, science and art, government and civilization, we would never get beyond the border of barbarism. But we find immense foundations under us and start far up on the walls of the world.

Yet there are foundations and foundations.

"But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Some things are done once for all and cannot be improved or changed.

The mountains have fixed foundations and will not change in our time. The sun has light stored up for all coming generations, and the solar system is stabilized for millions of years.

There is one fixed and final foundation on which to build our religious faith and life, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

He is the Son of God above and beyond all our little systems that change with the passing years and have their day and cease to be.

Let us see to it that all our building is on this Foundation and conforms to it in all its lines and angles, and then in every storm and flood it will not fall but stand forever.

5. All Things Are Ours

Paul now enunciates a great fact. Let no one glory in any particular man or party, for all truth and all things are ours, from whatever source they come.

There is some truth in the teaching of every thinker, whatever his name or school of thought.

A pure total error cannot exist, and every theory or doctrine, however much error it contains, also contains some truth which we should see and seize and build into our temple of truth.

Paul draws up his catalogue of the things that were his and we may extend it indefinitely.

All things are ours, whether of astronomy or geology, science or literature or philosophy or art, and we should be hospitable to all truth in whatever form or from whatever source it comes.

Paul's catalogue widens to take in "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours."

These all belong to us in that we may turn them to our service and make them yield to us a harvest of blessing.

As the chemist takes slime and slag and extracts from them the most exquisite perfumes and the rarest and most beautiful colors, so may we by the grace of God take all the things of the world and its very dregs and tragedies and tears and turn them into the finest graces and most beautiful adornments of the spirit.

And the proof and climax of all this is that we "are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

When our life is hid with Christ in God we share in all the power and wisdom and goodness and love and blessing of the beatific life of God and then whatever our outward condition we "are complete in him."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we reach unity of spirit?
2. In every division is there likely to be some fault on both sides?
3. How seriously has the Christian church been injured by its divisions?
4. How far should we go in yielding ground in order to avoid strife?
5. How can we turn everything to our own good?

LESSON XIII—SEPTEMBER 23

The Christian Basis of Total Abstinence

(Temperance Lesson)

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Abstinence for the Sake of Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian Standard of Social Conduct.

Golden Text: Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good. I Corinthians 10:24.

Devotional Reading: Romans 14:13–21.

Lesson Passage: I Corinthians 8:1–13.

Lesson Text: I Corinthians 8:13

1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth.

2 If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know;

3 But if any man loveth God, the same is known by him.

4 Concerning therefore the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that no idol is *anything* in the world, and that there is no God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many;

6 Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him.

7 Howbeit there is not in all men that knowledge: but some, being used until now to the idol, eat as *of* a thing sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

8 But food will not commend us to God: neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; nor, if we eat, are we the better.

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to the weak.

10 For if a man see thee who hast knowledge sitting at meat in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be emboldened to eat things sacrificed to idols?

11 For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died.

12 And thus, sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, ye sin against Christ.

13 Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Knowledge and Controversy.***
2. ***The Practical Influence of Example.***
3. ***Our Liberty as a Stumblingblock to Others.***
4. ***The Principle of Abstinence.***
5. ***Limitation and Application of the Principle.***

New occasions teach new duties. A new life comes into conflict at points with the old life.

> These Corinthians had received new truth and a higher life, and now they were troubled with questions that had never troubled them before.

Two of these questions they had submitted to Paul, and he discusses them in chapters 7 and 8 of this Epistle.

> The problem here treated is that of meat which had been offered to idols.

The Greeks were very religious and offered a portion of each meal and of each animal used for food on the altar of a god. The whole meal or carcass was thus devoted to the deity, and partaking of it was regarded as an act of worship.

> The question thus arose whether Christian converts should eat such meat and thereby seemingly sanction, if not join in, such worship.

It was difficult to avoid receiving this food, for not only was it found on the tables of heathen friends and in some instances in households in which there were Christian converts, but it was also put on sale in the public markets, so that one could never be sure that he was not unwittingly partaking of it.

> Thus weak consciences were troubled and fierce controversies arose.

This very question had been debated and a resolution concerning the practice had been adopted at the second general council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:29). It is remarkable that Paul makes no allusion to that decision, but discusses the question from his own point of view. Alford remarks that this "shows how little such decisions were at that time regarded as lastingly binding on the whole church; and how fully competent it was, even during the lifetime of the apostles, to Christians to open the question, on its own merits, once already decided."

However he was writing to Greeks, and they would know little about Jewish councils.

Questions of expediency, such as this was, are especially subject to continual readjustment. At one time and place they may be decided one way, and at another time and place they may be decided a different way.

1. Knowledge and Controversy

There appears to have been a party in the Corinthian church that claimed to be able to settle this question by their superior knowledge, and probably regarded with impatience or even contempt those that had doubts and difficulties.

Paul here discusses the question from their point of view. He admits their premises, but disputes their conclusion.

He first considers the value of knowledge itself in settling controverted questions. All have some degree of knowledge, and such knowledge is necessary. The Bible never depreciates knowledge: religion puts no premium on ignorance.

But mere knowledge is apt to inflate the mind and become proud and presumptuous. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth."

The intellect must be tempered with certain qualities of the heart, with humility and teachableness, before it can understand even purely scientific questions. Much more must it be deeply imbued with sympathy when it undertakes to settle personal questions and social relations. We can see social facts and duties in their right relations and proportions only when we view them through the lens of love.

Love sees many a palliating circumstance and suggests many a helpful service to which mere intellect is blind. The heart can see deeper than the brain.

If any man thinks that he knows anything without such a sympathetic spirit to clear and guide his vision, he knows nothing as he ought to know.

2. The Practical Influence of Example

Next, Paul considers the practical influence of our example on others less enlightened. From the premise that they knew that "an idol is nothing in the world" the Corinthians drew the conclusion that they

might partake of meat that had been offered to it. They with their superior enlightenment, knowing that an idol was nothing, were in no way compromised by eating it in their relation to the true God.

Paul again admits their premise, but reaches a different application.

"Howbeit there is not in all men that knowledge: but some, being used until now to the idol, eat as of a thing sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled." Here Paul suggests a far-reaching principle.

Conduct may be true and good for us, but we are bound to consider its practical influence upon others that may be less enlightened.

Some of the Corinthians could not rid themselves of the belief or feeling that in partaking of this meat they were doing homage to an idol and were thus slipping back into heathenism. Having this feeling, however mistaken it might be, they could not partake without guilt. Things that we think are wrong, are wrong for us, however right they may be in themselves.

We are then responsible for the influence of our example on others, and a course of conduct that may be right in itself yet becomes wrong for us when we know it will lead others into wrong or will wound their weak conscience.

3. Our Liberty as a Stumblingblock to Others

The same result is reached by Paul in considering another aspect of the subject, the spirituality and liberty of worship. "But food will not commend us to worship; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; nor, if we eat, are we the better." The argument here is that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace (Rom. 14:17).

Worship does not consist in eating or not eating certain kinds of food as we choose.

This argument is sound, and under proper conditions gives us full liberty in the choice of our food. Paul again admits the premise, but

against the application of these Corinthian Christians he raises an objection and warning. The proper conditions for this application of this principle were not present with them.

They were in peculiar circumstances, and they were bound to consider the effect of their liberty, not only on themselves, but also on others.

"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to the weak." Paul concedes that they with their superior knowledge had this liberty, but warns them not to use it so as to injure others. Their knowledge was good, but "through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died."

The best things in the world can be put to the worst uses. The knife that is used in slicing bread to support life may be used in slashing the throat to destroy it.

Our liberty, however good it may be for us, becomes an evil for others when we so use it as to lead them astray.

4. The Principle of Abstinence

Paul now gives his own solution of this vexatious problem in the noble resolution: "Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble."

Paul was not so far behind these Corinthians in knowledge that he needed to go to school to them. With his princely gifts, liberal education, large experience and special inspiration, he immeasurably surpassed them all. If any man might rightly have claimed the liberty of eating this meat that man was Paul: yet so solicitous was he for the welfare of his weaker brethren that, rather than "offend one of these little ones," he would forego his right, subject himself to severe self-sacrifice, and "eat no flesh for evermore."

The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and the stronger we are the more solicitous and self-sacrificing should we be for their welfare.

This principle comes to its loftiest expression in the cross of Christ. Paul nobly used it in solving a vexed question in his day, and, rightly applied, it will solve many difficult questions that confront Christians in our complex modern life.

5. Limitation and Application of the Principle

Yet we feel that the principle of abstinence for the sake of others calls for some limitation.

This principle applies only to questions of expediency and not to questions of absolute right and duty; to privileges and not to obligations.

The principles of arithmetic are the same throughout the world, but the size of an acre or the length of a mile may differ in different countries. So the ultimate principles of right and wrong are the same under every sky, but their application is modified by temporal and local conditions. We must be bound by the essential principles of ethics, but there are matters of privilege and expediency which may change with the circumstances.

The one class of actions are duties binding on us; the other are privileges which may be given up.

Our personal comforts in the way of food and drink and amusement are examples of privileges that may not be binding and may come under the rule of abstinence for the sake of others.

Again, things that are useful and noble in themselves should be used in harmony with the welfare of others and not to their injury.

Our gifts and possessions, knowledge, property, liberties, personal habits, comforts and enjoyments, come under this law.

It is not enough that we get these things in right ways: we must also use them in right ways so as to help and not injure others. And at points where they would do harm to others we must practice self-restraint and abstinence.

In Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Ethics*, Vol. II, in the section on "Negative Beneficence," he works out in a masterly analysis extending through five chapters the various ways in which beneficence puts restraints upon the exercise of our rights and privileges towards others.

Religion and science are at one at this point, as, when they understand each other, they are at all points.

The application of this principle to the temperance question is pertinent and close.

Even if it be admitted that the use of wine and other intoxicating drink is not personally injurious and dangerous, it will not be claimed that such use is a duty that cannot be escaped, unless it be prescribed by a physician, and provision is legally made for such need and use. At the best it ranks among personal privileges and comforts.

But it is not a privilege and comfort with many others: it is their slavery and misery.

The intoxicating cup is pouring a stream of poison and fire into the blood of the race and is burning up its manhood, body and soul. Whoever uses this cup, however harmlessly to himself, must consider whether he is not enticing others to their ruin, and putting himself in guilty complicity with this awful evil.

Paul, in the presence of a far less destructive social evil, practiced a noble self-denial that helped to save others and that made him great. "It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth" (Rom. 14:21).

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is unconscious influence?
2. Are we responsible for what we do not consciously intend?
3. Do we get as well as give good or bad influence from example?
4. When do we and when do we not have a right to impose abstinence on others?
5. What justifies legal prohibition of the liquor traffic?

LESSON XIV—SEPTEMBER 30

REVIEW

Paul the Missionary

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul the Dauntless.

Topic for Young People and Adults: In Labors More Abundant.

Golden Text: Christ liveth in me. Galatians 2:20.

The Third Quarter has covered the life of Paul from his first appearance at the stoning of Stephen to his settlement in Ephesus in his third missionary journey.

1. The Early Life of Saul

Every one has deep hereditary roots, and Paul's ran back through thousands of years of Hebrew history.

The first lesson takes us back to Moses and his great teaching as to the law of Jehovah in which Paul was deeply rooted.

There can be only one God, for there is not room in the universe for two, and we must first get into right relations with God or we shall be wrong everywhere else. The laws of God are not simply printed on paper, but are to be engraved on the heart and wrought into the whole texture of our personality. From the heart they must radiate out into the whole life and bring every thought and deed into harmonious expression of the law.

Whether in the privacy of the home or in social or public life we are to embody and live the law of God.

Paul now gives us a leaf out of his autobiography. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews in racial purity and religious orthodoxy. Yet he was also a Roman citizen and this played an important part in his life.

2. Saul and Stephen

Paul first appears upon the scene as Saul, the Hebrew form of Paul, amidst the lurid light and mob madness of the first martyrdom of a Christian.

Stephen, elected as a deacon but soon developing into a great preacher, began the work of prying the Christian church free from Judaism, and this brought upon him the fierce opposition of the Jews.

His defense showed that God manifested himself not only in the holy land and city, but also in many other places and is to be worshiped everywhere in spirit and in truth.

Stephen saw a spiritual vision that filled him with ecstasy, and his enraged enemies seized him and hurried him to the place of stoning. At this point appears Saul as the young man at whose feet the murderers laid their garments that they might do their work.

At first Saul stood in the background in silent complicity, but now he steps forward into the open. In this incriminating attitude and act is first seen the most powerful persecutor of the Christian faith who afterwards became its most powerful preacher. Having got a taste of blood, Saul wanted more of it and grew furious as he made havoc of the church and went forth seeking them as far as Damascus.

But did not his very fury seem to show that he was not sure of himself?

3. The Conversion of Saul

The conversion of Saul is one of the most dramatic and epochal events in the New Testament. Saul was now on his way to Damascus to stamp out any seeds of heresy in that city. He had had time to cool down and grow meditative in the silence of the desert and under the solemn stars.

Conscience began to consider. The expiring cry of Stephen persisted in ringing through his soul.

The Holy Spirit found him trembling upon the point of doubt and fell upon him at this critical moment.

A blinding light burnt through the sky and he was unhorsed. A voice spoke and he answered, instantly recognizing and yielding to Jesus as his Lord. Directions sent him into the city, where he received instructions from the Christians whom he had intended to seize and who were now his friends.

His conversion was thus a complex process in which others had a part. The humblest may help the greatest, and we are given a part in leading souls into the kingdom of God.

Saul was now filled full of faith and fervency. His mind cleared up into sharp and sure conviction, and his heart grew calm and strong. Having been baptized he straightway preached Jesus in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God.

He now received his appointment to be a witness to the Gentiles and at once entered upon his great career as a splendid and powerful preacher of the gosepl.

4. Saul's Early Ministry

Saul, volcanic and explosive in temperament, did whatever he did with all his might, and when he was converted he suddenly as a flash of light turned completely around and began to preach the very faith he had sought to destroy.

He began his preaching in the synagogue with his own people in his own church, and our work always begins at home.

His fundamental theme was that "Jesus is the Son of God." He was not proclaiming Jesus as "a man of genius" or a new intellectual light in the world, but as one mighty to save.

His hearers were amazed at such preaching from such a convert.

But conversions as amazing have occurred all through the history of Christianity and may be seen to-day. Saul fed on his own faith and fervency so that he increased in strength and confounded the Jews in Damascus.

Our faith can grow only as we use it and the more we exercise it in persuading others the more of it shall we have in our own minds and hearts.

Persecution now arose against the persecutor and Saul was given a dose of his own medicine. He escaped a plot to kill him and after a time went to Jerusalem where after some hesitation he was received by the apostles.

Saul then disappears for a time in his native city of Tarsus, and when a great revival broke out in Antioch Barnabas went after him and brought him to that city where he began his public career as a preacher and missionary.

5. The First Foreign Missionaries

No sooner was a church founded in Antioch than it was moved by the Holy Spirit to send forth foreign missionaries, and the choice fell upon Barnabas and Saul.

They were the ablest preachers in the new church and it might have been objected that they were needed at home, but Christianity has always sent its most gifted sons and daughters to foreign fields.

The little company of three, Barnabas and Saul and Mark, proceeded by ship westward to Cyprus and worked their way to the western end of the island. Here they gained access to the Roman governor of the island, but they also struck a rock of opposition in the person of a sorcerer, one of the religious quacks that then swarmed in the religiously decadent Roman Empire.

However, they won Sergius the governor and had some encouragement in their first field.

The missionaries now crossed over to the mainland in Asia Minor, and at this point Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.

We are not told why he did this, but his act was regarded with grave disapproval by Saul.

Their first preaching point was at Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul spoke in the synagogue with such effect that on the next Sabbath a great congregation was present.

Opposition arose and the missionaries turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, who received the gospel and glorified God.

6. Paul in a Pagan Country

The situation at Antioch in Pisidia soon became untenable for Paul and Barnabas and they passed on to Iconium, where they spoke "boldly in the Lord," with good results.

However they were soon stoned out of the town and passed on to Lystra, where they had a notable experience.

Paul wrought a miracle of healing with the result that the people proposed to worship the missionaries as two of their heathen gods,

Jupiter and Mercury. They were religious, however blind they were in their worship.

There might have been some temptation on the part of the missionaries to receive such personal exaltation and adulation, but Paul promptly put his foot down on the project and proclaimed the true God, preaching a sermon based on the witness of nature to the divine providence.

Paul and Barnabas would sail under no false colors, profit by no fictitious worth, and we should so live the Christian life that others will forget us and glorify only God.

Worship in Lystra was soon turned to stoning, and Paul lay wounded. He never stoned Jews to make them Christians as he had stoned Christians to make them Jews.

It is better to be stoned ourselves wrongly than to stone others.

7. The Council at Jerusalem

The missionaries returned to Antioch to become embroiled in a trouble at home

A controversy arose by reason of the claim of some Jewish Christians that Gentile converts should be circumcised.

A council was held at Jerusalem to decide this momentous question fraught with the gravest consequences even for us. Paul and Barnabas went up to this council and spoke in behalf of liberty to the Gentiles to enter the Christian church without submitting to the Mosaic rite. They had come back from their first journey with their honors thick upon them, and their words carried great weight.

James, the brother of the Lord and head of the church in Jerusalem, took the side of liberty, and this carried the day.

A letter was drawn up embodying the decision of the council to be sent to the churches.

It contained some elements of compromise, as it enjoined the Gentile Christians from doing things that would needlessly offend the Jews, but it made room for Gentile membership without the Mosaic rites, and thereby saved Christianity from being narrowed to a Jewish sect and gave it worldwide freedom and power.

8. Paul Carries the Gospel into Europe

We next find Paul out on his second missionary journey in the course of which he arrived at Troas, over against Europe.

In a vision he heard a voice calling him and he crossed the narrow arm of the Ægean Sea into Europe, one of the most epochal crossings of history.

Paul, together with Silas and Timothy and Luke, opened their work in Europe at Philippi and began by attending a Jewish prayer meeting on a river bank. Here they gained their first European convert, a woman who was a dealer in purple goods and was a devout attendant at the place of prayer.

Her conversion took place in a series of gradual steps by which she went to church, heard the word, had her heart opened by the Lord, gave attention to the things spoken and was baptized with her household.

The " man " Paul heard calling to him to come over into Europe thus turned out to be a woman, and woman has ever been the first to hear the gospel in heathen lands and has ever given to it her devotion. This is a great honor to the gospel.

9. Paul in a Roman Prison

The gradual conversion of Lydia was immediately followed by the earthquake conversion of a Roman jailer, so diverse are the types of this change in the soul and life.

The missionaries were arrested because Paul had cast an evil spirit out of a slave girl who was being used by her owners as a fortune teller. This saved the girl, but it destroyed her value as a profit-earning piece of property, and this quickly resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of Paul and Silas.

At midnight they held a prayer meeting in the jail at which they sang and prayed. An earthquake loosened the prisoners, and the jailer was about to kill himself as he knew he must answer for the prisoners with his own life, when Paul in the nick of time cried out in a word that saved his life. The jailer then instantly called to know what to do to be saved, and again Paul told him in a compact and thrilling command just what to do.

The great question received a short answer that is sufficient for all penitent souls through all time.

10. Paul in Thessalonica

The missionaries passed on to Thessalonica where Paul preached in the synagogue with the result that some believed and some believed not. False charges were raised against the missionaries by the Jews and the brethren sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. Here they found more congenial soil for the gospel seed as these Bereans were "more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word," a fine tribute to their openmindedness.

They were not fickle and blown about by every wind of new doctrine and took no man's word for truth, but investigated and found the truth for themselves.

11. Paul at Athens and Corinth

Paul passed on to Athens, the university city and art center of the world, where he preached a notable sermon on Mars' Hill with small results, and then went to Corinth, a city of wealth and luxury and vice.

Here he supported himself by his trade of tentmaking and reasoned in the synagogue and made converts but met with the usual opposition and also fell into deep despondency in which he was vouchsafed a special vision of encouragement from the Lord.

12. Paul Writes to His Friends in Corinth

Paul while in Ephesus on his third missionary journey heard of an unhappy state of affairs in the Corinthian Church growing out of party spirit and strife together with laxity in morals, and he wrote his first letter to them rebuking and correcting their errors and establishing them on the one foundation in the true faith.

13. The Christian Basis of Total Abstinence

Paul's letters are an arsenal of ammunition for correcting errors and establishing doctrines and virtues to this day, and a passage in First Corinthians in which he deals with a question of moral expediency closely applies to similar questions and especially to total abstinence in our day.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Trace the steps of Paul from his first appearance in Jerusalem to his residence in Ephesus.

2. What are some of the outstanding characteristics of Paul?

3. Were his life and experience wholly peculiar to himself and to his day, or are they in principle reproducible in our lives in our day?

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH QUARTER

The lessons of the Fourth Quarter are mostly drawn from the letters of Paul, and these taken together form his autobiography and reflect the many-sided, variously-colored aspects of his life. They are full of the city and market place and sea, of the Roman theater and games, of the religious ideas and controversies of his day, and of all the storm and stress of his picturesque career.

Hebrew religion and Greek thought and Roman life are interwoven throughout their entire fabric.

They are Paul as painted by himself, and no other life in the Roman Empire of his day stands out in such intimate and lifelike portraiture.

There is plainly in them a progression of ideas and spirit. In general this progress is from the outer to the inner, from the objective and ceremonial to the subjective and spiritual, from controversy to conciliation, from logic to life, from the external apocalyptic kingdom in the world to the inner reign of God in the heart, from theology to religion, from argument with others to meditation with himself, from factionalism to fellowship, from tumult to calm, from storm to serenity, and from passion to peace.

The letters begin with the battle-cry and trumpet blast of Galatians and close with the quiet admonitions and affectionate endearments of II Timothy.

In Galatians he is a controversialist, in Corinthians a church disciplinarian, in Romans a systematic theologian, in Ephesians a mystic, in Colossians a philosopher, in Philemon a friend and philanthropist, and in II Timothy he is "Paul the aged" writing farewell words with a fettered and weary hand and is only awaiting the executioner's sword.

Thus the stream, that at first leaped forth as a raging mountain torrent and then ran a swift course, at length slowed down into a calm current and finally broadened out and silently mingled with the immeasurable sea.

It is a privilege to study these letters whose significance increases as we read them in their right places and relations, and they are strangely modern in principle and tone and from them we may draw guidance and comfort, strength and inspiration for our lives.

FOURTH QUARTER

LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL

(Second Half of a Six Months' Course)

LESSON I—OCTOBER 7

Paul in Ephesus

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Outgrowing Superstition.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Growing together in Christ.

Golden Text: We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 3:14–21.

Lesson Passage: Acts 19:1–41.

Lesson Text: Acts 19:8–10, 18–20; Ephe. 4:11–16

8 And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading *as to* things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

10 And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

18 Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds.

19 And not a few of them that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.

11 And he gave some *to be* apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error;

15 But speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, *even* Christ;

16 From whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in *due* measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. The Way in Ephesus.
2. Evil Deeds Confessed.
3. Bad Books Burned.
4. Different Offices.
5. A Fullgrown Man.
6. Speaking Truth in Love.

Ephesus was the principal city of Asia Minor, located on the coast of the Ægean Sea, and was a center of commerce, wealth and art.

Its crowning glory was the famous Temple of Diana that was counted one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It rose a mass of pure white marble, magnificently columned and carved, and its brilliant beauty glittered far out at sea. Hewn out of the side of the overhanging mountain was the great theater capable of seating fifty thousand persons, the stone seats of which yet remain.

Under the shadow of this magnificent Temple of pagan worship Paul, at this time on his third missionary journey, began his preaching, first in the synagogue and then in the lecture room of Tyrannus. The presence of the Jew was at first unknown to the Greek priests and they would have scorned him.

But his preaching soon began to diminish the throngs of worshipers in the Temple and in time the gospel of the Nazarene inserted a wedge under its foundations that caused it to crumble and the worship of "the great goddess Diana" disappeared from the world.

1. The Way in Ephesus

Paul preached boldly in the synagogue for three months, a much longer time than he was usually permitted to remain, "reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God."

The statement bears the marks of Paul's preaching, for he was essentially a reasoner, appealing to facts and principles and working them out into their logical connection and results.

Religion should never be permitted to slip from the base of truth and logic off into mere authority or emotionalism or fanaticism, for its value consists in its facts, and they should be so presented as to persuade the thinking mind and move the will.

The gospel became known at this time as "the Way," and this characterized it and marked it off from pagan faiths. It was a way of believing and living, a practical word indicating that Christian faith is a practical thing.

It does not turn us loose in a trackless wilderness or set us afloat on a sea or send us up into the air, but it lays down before us a well-constructed road on which we can walk in safety to a sure destination.

Yet plain and good as the Way was, some were hardened against it and spoke evil of it, and such has ever been the reception of the gospel.

God will not override our reason and force us into his kingdom, but permits and requires us to exercise our own responsibility and choice. The invitation ever is, "He that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

2. Evil Deeds Confessed

Others however believed, and they gave good evidence of their conversion as they "came, confessing, and declaring their deeds."

These Ephesian believers took the right path.

Their open confession was an act of sincere repentance and decision and courage. They had been following some of the religious impostors and quacks of the day that used cunning arts and caught many foolish people, and such deceivers are still plentiful enough with us and entrap many unwary and misguided souls. It took some courage for these converts to come out from such company and make a clean breast of these evil and often unclean things. Secret repentance was not enough for them: only public confession and renunciation could clear and cleanse their consciences.

Honest confession is ever good for the soul. It brings the soul into definite perception and conviction of its sin; it deepens and fixes this conviction by expressing it in public speech and pledge; and publicity helps to put it beyond recall.

Such confession may be made to the pastor and other officers of the church, or before the church and the world, and it should always be made unto God. It brings the soul into right relations with God so that he can exercise on it his pardoning and cleansing grace.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Bad Books Burned

These penitent believers and converts did not stop even with confession.

They brought their curious arts or devices and their magical books, piled them up in a heap and burned them in the sight of all.

Magical books have a great fascination for Jews, and at this day great quantities of them are sold among the illiterate and superstitious foreign Jews in New York City and other cities. Ephesus was famous for magical writings, often mere strips of parchment inscribed with mysterious words and sentences, which were supposed to have miraculous virtue.

The value of such books burnt on this occasion amounted to fifty thousand pieces of silver, which might be equal to-day to something like fifty thousand dollars. We need not be surprised at the large sum, for such books are always sold at a high price. The books of magic sold to Jews in New York are mere cheap pamphlets, but they sell for a dollar apiece.

The burning of these books was a decisive proof of repentance.

These Ephesians burnt their bridges behind them and left no way by which they could secretly return to their magical arts.

There are many books in the world that ought to be burned.

If all the impure books and magazines and papers exposed in our bookstalls out on the street or hidden and sold secretly, together with all the gambling tools and evil implements in the world, were piled up in one great heap and set on fire they would make a tremendous conflagration, but it would cleanse the world of much temptation and wickedness.

There are some things that are not fit to be seen anywhere and should only be destroyed, and if we have any of them in our possession we should consign them to the flames.

With believers and converts bringing forth such fruits of repentance we are not surprised that in Ephesus the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

4. Different Offices

The lesson now gives us a leaf out of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, written afterwards when he was a prisoner in Rome, in which he encourages them and gives them much good instruction in the Christian life.

Paul always followed up his converts and by repeated visits or letters kept in touch with them and thus warned and guided and strengthened them, a good plan for any pastor or teacher to follow. To gain converts and then let them drift back into the world is like starting a boat to sea without captain or rudder to drift with winds and waves.

Paul in this passage refers to the different offices that had already grown up in the church. We have no specific information as to when they had been instituted and, curiously enough, the only office of which we have a record of its initiation, that of deacon, is not mentioned in this list.

These and all offices in the Christian church appear to have grown up out of emergencies that called for them as a practical need.

So it has been all down through the Christian centuries, and we have many more offices in our churches that have arisen in the same way, and no doubt others will yet arise.

The test for such offices is practical need and good sense, and such marks are also indications of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, these names largely explain themselves. It is clear that the church could not proceed far in its development without becoming increasingly organized, as is the necessary way of any growing thing.

These offices illustrate the principle of the division and specialization of labor, certain men being set apart and trained for certain lines of work.

It is equally necessary that they work together in harmony, and any jealousy and friction and disharmony among them will be injurious if not fatal to the success of the church.

It is our duty, when called to any of these or other offices in the church, to fit ourselves for the work and carry it on in faithful devotion to it, whether the office be high and conspicuous in its service, or humble and hard and obscure. "Having gifts differing, . . . let us give ourselves unto our ministry" (Rom. 12:6–8).

5. A Fullgrown Man

The end of these offices and of all our Christian work is "the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The gospel has a practical object in view and the church is a practical institution.

The object is not to construct an intellectual system and logical creed to which all must conform; or to build up an ecclesiastical hierarchy and political system; nor is its immediate object to gain future rewards and escape future punishment; but it is to make good people right here and now, genuine saints, fullgrown men.

This is the proper output of the Christian church, just as the proper products of a farm are wheat and corn, or of a factory are the goods it is built to make.

If the church does not show such products, if its people are no nearer perfection and no more fully grown than the people of the world but are just as faulty and childish as though they had never been in the church, it is proved a failure and may be an impertinence among men and an offense to God.

The true way to measure ourselves as Christians and church members is to stand up alongside of Jesus Christ and see how far short we fall of his stature!

By this measure are we all condemned, but this is the standard and ideal towards which we must ever strive.

6. Speaking the Truth in Love

One general means by which we are to "grow up in all things into him" is "speaking the truth in love," living the truth in love, or "truthing it in love" as the Greek literally means.

Always must the Christian speak and live the truth, for truth is reality and rock that will stand and all falsity is sinking sand.

This means that we must avoid and eschew every kind of untruth, insincerity, hypocrisy, misrepresentation and misleading insinuation, and speak the truth in our homes and business and social relations and especially as Christian brethren must we be fair-minded and patient and charitable with one another.

And the truth must be spoken in love, for it is possible to speak truth, or what we believe to be truth, in such a harsh and censorious and unbrotherly spirit as turns it into injustice and hurt.

Love in speaking the truth "suffereth long, and is kind; . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The great need of the world and even of the Christian church is that truth be spoken and lived in love, and then the body of Christ, "fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working of the measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. To what extent has the Christian "Way" been tried out in the world?
2. Should we make a public confession of all our evil ways?
3. What can be done about the increasing flood of impure literature?
4. Has the church ever overloaded itself with organizations?
5. What elements enter into a fullgrown man?
6. Can truth always be spoken in love?

LESSON II—OCTOBER 14

Spiritual Gifts

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Greatest of All Gifts.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Spiritual Gifts.

Golden Text: Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love. I Corinthians 13:13.

Devotional Reading: I John 4:7–16.

Lesson Passage: I Corinthians 12–14.

Lesson Text: I Corinthians 12:4–7, 31; 13:1–8, 13

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all.

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal.

31 But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you.

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.

2 And if I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And if I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Love suffereth long, *and* is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Love never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall be done away; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall be done away.

13 But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Gifts Differing.***
2. ***Love the Incomparable Grace.***
3. ***Love an Inclusive Gift.***
4. ***The Permanence of Love.***
5. ***Love the Supreme Grace.***

Paul, the masterly logician, philosopher and preacher, was also a poet. The solid granite of his intellect was veined with rich colors and bloomed into flowers. His logical mind was mixed with imagination and at times his twisted and knotted sentences slipped into rhythm and soared into song.

The Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians is one of the finest prose-poems in the Bible and in all " the golden scriptures of love."

Before and after it rages a logical battle, but here Paul rises above argument into panegyric and his logic becomes transfigured into glowing poetry. The shining theme of the prose-poem is love, the golden thread that gleams through all the poetry of the world.

Better than any formal analysis of the chapter is the simple and repeated reading of it so as to let its beautiful spirit percolate through and saturate the heart.

1. Gifts Differing

The lyric on love is preceded in our lesson with a passage from the preceding chapter on gifts differing.

One Spirit, but many manifestations; one Lord, but diversities of administration; one God, but many workings: this principle runs through all life and out through the universe.

One light, but many colors; one heaven, but many stars; one human mind, but an infinite variety of types and temperaments; one field of work, but many trades and professions: thus fundamental unity breaks into endless variety, and this makes the picturesqueness and ever-changing interest and beauty of our world. This also promotes the efficiency of our work, for it is only as we differ that we can have the division of labor that vastly increases production in all fields.

It would be a monotonous and barren, dull and dreary world in which we were all alike.

We would soon get tired of one another in the endless repetition of ourselves. But gifts differing make us ever interesting to one another and blend diverse personalities into stronger and richer unity and harmony.

Each should be content with his own gift and develop it into its fullest power and service. Even if he has only one talent and that a humble one, it has in it endless possibilities of usefulness and beauty.

All these gifts are bestowed upon us "to profit withal": not for show and vanity, or for envy and strife, but for mutual service and a larger harvest of goodness and blessing in the world.

However there is an order of rank in gifts and among them there is "a most excellent way."

2. Love the Incomparable Gift

This "most excellent way" is shown to be love by comparing with it other gifts and graces.

The most shining gifts pale before its brightness.

Eloquence is a great and splendid gift and few things are more coveted among men.

But in itself it has no moral virtue. An eloquent tongue is simply a powerful tool which a bad man can use as deftly as a good man. A lie may be told as eloquently as the truth. And so eloquence loses in the contest with love and its music becomes a sounding cymbal and clanging brass.

Knowledge is next compared with love and found wanting.

Knowledge lies at the root of all our growth and secretes all our civilization. Yet, like eloquence, knowledge has no moral quality in itself and may be used with equal skill and power for good or evil. A man may graduate from a great university and be a master of science and art and yet be a menace to the community.

Faith next steps forward to compete with love, and we might surely expect to see it win the crown, yet this mighty grace retires vanquished.

Even faith that could remove mountains, without love, is nothing. Such faith would be cold and unattractive and would never produce fruitful and beautiful character. Faith is a root that is sure to blossom into love, but as long as it stays a root and does not bloom, it is nothing.

Finally, self-sacrifice comes forward to compete with love, bestowing all its goods as charity and giving its very body to be burned.

Again we may be sure the prize will be won, and again it is lost, and love is triumphant. Such sacrifice is rare devotion and imitates the very cross of Christ, but it might be only imitation and spring from a wrong motive.

These are high and fine graces, but the character that has these and yet lacks love would lack the highest and most lovely grace of all and would be that partial success that is yet painful failure.

The runner may lose the race by the last inch, but he loses it none the less. The peach may have a sound core and a scarlet blush, but if it lacks sweetness and spice it cannot take the prize as the finest and best.

Thus love holds its ground against all comers and wears the brightest crown of Christian character.

This is not only a truth of Scripture, but we all instinctively know and acknowledge that a lovable and loving spirit is the chief element of human worth and the final finishing touch of perfection in the human soul.

3. Love an Inclusive Grace

Love is an inclusive grace: all other graces spring from it and are forms of it.

"As every lovely hue is light, so every grace is love."

Patience is love bearing burdens: kindness is love showing sympathy; generosity is love giving; humility is love taking a lowly seat; courtesy is love flowering out into beautiful behaviour; unselfishness is love forgetting itself; hope is love looking on the bright side of things; joy is the sunshine and music of love, affection its warmth, and purity its whiteness.

Love is thus a solid beam of light that breaks into all beautiful colors.

The light of the sun streams down upon us in unsullied whiteness and we may little suspect the wealth of color and beauty that are wrapped up

and hidden in its beams. But the physicist passes it through his lens, or nature strains it through its great natural prism of a storm-cloud, and out it comes in a fan-like sheaf of colors or a jeweled bow that is one of the most splendid sights of the world. All the myriad objects of nature have the power of sifting sunlight, each leaf or bud, bird wing or bit of stone selecting its own color, and thus the whole face of the world is painted by the Master Artist.

So with these graces of character. They have each its separate element of worth and beauty, but when mingled and melted together they form the pure beams of love, and love when analyzed and untangled separates into these graces.

Love is thus not simply a beautiful theory or sentiment to be expressed in poetry and admired, but it is a practical fact and force that passes into our life-blood and pulses in all our thoughts and deeds. It does not require some conspicuous position or heroic occasion or any particular circumstance for its exercise, but it can be manifested anywhere.

It will bloom as richly in the cottage as in the palace; it will adorn the garb of poverty as finely as it will embroider silken robes and royal purple.

It is not a jewel to be worn on special occasions, but a spirit of personal beauty and charm that is ever to shine through the features of the face and irradiate the whole personality. The harder our task and the darker our place, the brighter may it shine.

All elements may be transmuted into its light; and every one is to take his own experience and by hoping and enduring all things become radiant with this grace.

4. The Permanence of Love

The permanence of love is next set forth.

"Love never faileth"—it is an immortal child of the heart and can never die.

It is not a means to a higher end, but the highest end in itself, and so its mission can never cease. The fuller it grows and the sweeter it swells in the soul, the greater is the need for its continuance.

In this respect it rises infinitely above some other graces.

Some gifts are only means that disappear with the attainment of their ends. The stalk has fulfilled its mission and is cast aside as chaff when it has ripened its head of wheat. The plough has served its purpose and is laid aside when it has ploughed its field.

Some gifts and graces are of this temporary nature.

Prophecies fail by being fulfilled, their very success is their death, as blossoms wither and fall as their fruit ripens.

Tongues shall cease.

The most eloquent tongue must soon lie silent in the dust. Languages and libraries are ever becoming obsolete and being entombed as dead languages. All books and libraries shall perish, and all the infinite babble of human speech will vanish into eternal silence.

Knowledge also shall be done away.

There is a sense in which present knowledge is ever passing. It is partial and imperfect, at every point limited and mixed with error, and it is ever losing itself in larger truth as rivers are lost in the sea. What we do know is only an infinitesimal fraction of what we do not know, and the wider the circle of our light the wider still is the wall of darkness that shuts us in.

As we grow out of childhood into manhood we leave our childish thoughts behind us; or, rather, these childish ideas merge and melt into the truer and wiser knowledge of later days.

Religious truth is subject to this law and is constantly passing away into new forms of larger knowledge.

The Christian world has put away many of the childish forms of Judaism and many of its own childish notions of earlier days and is ever growing into the wider and riper wisdom of the enlarging world.

Christ is fulfilling his promise that he would ever lead us into larger truth as we learn to bear it.

But when all these temporary gifts and graces have fulfilled their end and faded away, love will have arrived at its full-blown blossom and will bloom forever.

5. Love the Supreme Grace

Paul now reaches the climax of his panegyric and crowns love as the supreme grace.

Faith, hope and love abide eternal; they are of the essence of the spirit and can never be outgrown.

There will always be work for faith to do and it will continue as confident trust in God throughout eternity. Hope, also, will always have a future as it looks forward to things to come. But greater than these is love.

Love is greater than faith and hope because it is a finer and richer state and exercise of the soul, and because it is more useful, the minister of greater blessings and joy.

Faith is the gravitation that holds the moral universe together, but love is the light that irradiates it with splendor and makes it bloom and bear fruit.

Love is also greater than faith and hope because it contains these roots and seeds within itself.

We may believe one whom we cannot love, but we cannot love one whom we cannot believe. We can also hope for one without loving him, but we cannot love one without hoping the best for him. Love includes faith and hope and all other graces and "therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Finally, love is greater than faith and hope because love is the end for which faith and hope are means.

We trust and hope in order that we may love. Root and branch and leaf exist for blossom and fruit. Love is the finest blossom and richest fruit of the soul for which all other states exist and into which they crystallize and ripen.

Therefore when love fails, all things else fail, and when it blooms it is the supremest blossom of life and "the greatest thing in the world."

It is also the greatest thing in all worlds. It comes to its highest and finest and perfect expression in God himself. "God is love."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is love?
2. What is John's teaching on love in his Gospels and Epistles?
3. What is self-love and how can it be distinguished from selfishness?
4. How can we manifest our love to others?
5. Can we love everybody?
6. What social problems would the spirit of mutual love solve?

LESSON III—OCTOBER 21

Christian Stewardship

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Is God's Claim on Us?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Principles of Christian Stewardship.

Golden Text: First they gave their own selves to the Lord. II. Cor. 8:5.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 95:1–7.

Lesson Passage: II Corinthians 8:1–9:15.

Lesson Text: II Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-7, 15

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3 For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, *they gave* of their own accord,

4 Beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints:

5 And *this*, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also.

7 But as ye abound in everything, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all earnestness, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.

6 But this *I say*, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 *Let* each man *do* according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

15 Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Liberality of the Macedonians.***
2. ***Who Gave Their Own Selves.***
3. ***The Same Grace Urged on the Corinthians.***
4. ***The Supreme Example of Christ.***
5. ***A Cheerful Giver.***

This lesson is about money.

In the church as in the world money is a motive power.

Money has spiritual affinities and energies. In a profound sense money makes the gospel go. Money is a constant crying need, and the lack of it one of the greatest obstacles in our Christian work. How to get money perplexes and hampers all our churches and boards and charities.

The same difficulties that embarrass us beset the early churches, and in this passage we find Paul wrestling with the money question.

The early Christians were generally very poor, and those at Jerusalem, where at this period "hard times" were terribly severe, were in pitiful distress.

The bond of brotherhood among these persecuted Christians was strong and tender, and they made noble efforts to help one another.

The spirit that has dotted Christendom with hospitals and asylums and charity organizations was at work in a world that practically knew not such things.

Paul, after leaving Ephesus, where he had written his First Epistle to the Corinthians, passed over into Macedonia, where he gathered contributions for the poor at Jerusalem. While in Macedonia he wrote this Second Epistle to the Corinthians in which, in the passage before us, he urges the same duty upon them.

1. The Liberality of the Macedonians

It was the self-sacrificing liberality of these poor Macedonians that moved Paul to appeal to the richer Corinthians to do likewise, which illustrates the power of example and of unconscious influence.

The liberality of the Macedonians was a fruit of the grace of God.

All virtues spring from God's grace working in us, and we must get the grace before we can get the virtue.

Giving of our means is a fruit of grace as certainly as faith or prayer or obedience.

It is not a matter left to our personal taste and convenience, but it is a fundamental principle of Christian character and life.

In conversion the pocketbook must go along with the man that owns it.

These Macedonians abounded in liberality in their deep poverty and great affliction. They did not plead their poverty as an excuse for not giving or urge that their gifts would be so small that they would not count. Their own hardships only gave them a keener sense of the hardships of others and made them more self-sacrificing.

Giving is not an exclusive duty of the rich, but rests equally on the poor.

The poor owe the duty and need the discipline of giving as well as the rich, and in God's treasury the poor widow's penny may count for as much as the rich man's pound.

It is marvelous what a single dollar or cent may accomplish when cast into the treasury and providence of the Lord.

The Macedonians gave up to and even beyond the measure of their ability. They did not try to see how little they could give, but how much. Their generous souls were larger than their narrow means; their sympathies outran their abilities. With us it is often the other way: our purses are larger than our souls; our narrow sympathies contract and shut up our broad means.

The stringency that causes such dearth of means in our Christian work is not in the money market but in the minds of Christians. If we were as liberal as we are able the treasury of God would be full.

2. Who Gave Their Own Selves

The Macedonians gave as an act of fellowship with the saints. They never had seen these poor Christians in Jerusalem and had no personal acquaintance with them, but they felt the ties of spiritual kinship that bound themselves to them.

Christianity widens our sense of brotherhood and fellowship so as to take in all men.

It knows no distinctions of race or rank, of class or of climate; its sense of brotherhood does not stop at red and blue lines on the map.

We owe every human being a gift as our brother, especially the highest gift of the gospel, that we may have fellowship together as saints.

These Macedonians "first gave their own selves to the Lord." That was the secret of their giving, the root out of which all their noble generosity grew and blossomed. When the center of a circle is moved every point on the circumference moves with it.

When a man gives himself to the Lord everything that belongs to him goes with him.

The best gift we can give to others is not money, but self, personal sympathy and helpfulness; and the greatest gift we can give to God is ourselves, just as the greatest gift a man can give to his country in national danger is not his property but his life.

God wants this gift from us first, for when he gets this he will easily get all things else.

We have doubtless moved far ahead of these Macedonians in many points, but we have not yet caught up with them at this point—the grace of liberality.

No wonder that their unselfish and splendid generosity deeply touched Paul and moved him to wish that the same spirit might possess all his churches and that their light still shines across all these centuries as an example and inspiration to us.

3. The Same Grace Urged on the Corinthians

Paul desired that the same grace of liberality might be completed in the Corinthians.

What was grace in Macedonia was equally grace in Corinth.

The gospel brings forth the same fruit under every sky and everywhere works grace.

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth (12:18), who had begun to stir up the Corinthians on the duty of liberality in giving, and now, as he was about to return, Paul hoped that he would be able to complete the work.

It is not enough to begin a Christian grace; it must be carried on to perfection.

As the Corinthians abounded in other graces, so Paul urged them to abound in this grace also.

Paul, who has always the soul of kindness and courtesy, was careful to commend them for the virtues in which they were conspicuous before calling attention to the virtue in which they were deficient.

The first duty of a critic is to see good points and commend them.

This puts him in pleasant relations with those criticized and prepares the way for helpful correction. First commend, then correct.

These Corinthians had faith, utterance, knowledge, earnestness, and love, five grand Christian graces, but these were not enough.

A man might have all these in some degree and still be stingy and mean.

No number of virtues are enough as long as any one virtue is missing. One sin makes a sinner, but one grace does not make a saint.

Christian character is built on lines of symmetry and full proportion throughout, every grace in its place, as the musician must have every note in his music, and the painter every stroke of his brush and touch of color in his picture.

There are many one-sided, ill-proportioned Christians.

It is easy to have a few virtues: the difficult thing is to have all in their proper proportion and harmony.

The Christian ideal is to attain "unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

4. The Supreme Example of Christ

Paul desired to test their love by their liberality. The Corinthians professed love for Paul and for the brethren and for God: here was a chance to prove their profession by performance.

Mere talk is cheap, it is deeds that count.

If no charities come out of a man, there is no charity in him. We can tell what is in us by what is coming out of us. The sincerity and worth and force of character are shown and tested by the conduct that grows out of it.

Paul appeals to the illustrious example of the Lord Jesus Christ as an incentive to the Corinthians. He was rich with all the ineffable glories of heaven, yet for our sakes he emptied himself that we through his poverty might become rich (Phil. 2:5–11).

This is the central wonder and eternal glory of the gospel: here is self-sacrifice that infinitely exceeds all our power of conception.

God asks no virtue of us that does not shine in splendor out of his own character.

Christ stands as our ideal at every point.

He asks us to give ourselves to him and to love others, but he first loved us and gave himself for us. To be a Christian is to have Christ's mind in us. As the Corinthians had professed some willingness to give, Paul now urges them to turn their words into deeds.

The Corinthians had made a start in the matter of this contribution for the poor in Jerusalem before the Macedonians; but they had fallen behind while the Macedonians had pushed ahead. Paul urges them to come up to the full performance of what they had begun, to make good their promises and pay their subscriptions.

It reads as though Paul were writing to many a modern congregation and urging them to make up their deficit in their account with the church treasurer and with the church boards.

There appears to have been some indication of Corinthian fickleness in this matter, and Paul broadly hints at it. If so, they were not the last people that promised more than they paid.

There is danger of starting in a work too ardently and then cooling off and slowing down.

We should count the cost before we begin and form a resolution and make preparation that will carry us all the way through. It is not enough to be willing to give or to work for Christ; we must do the work itself.

5. A Cheerful Giver

Much depends on the spirit in which gifts are given. God loveth a cheerful giver, a hilarious giver, which is the literal Greek word, a giver that shouts and throws his hat up in giving, even as the Hebrew priests

blew their silver trumpets as the smoke of their sacrifice went up from the altar. Gifts should come out of the heart willingly and joyously, as a stream leaps from its fountain and song gushes from the throat of a bird.

Some Christians give because they want to give; a good cause needs only to be presented to them when they respond to it generously.

Others must be put under pressure, and a contribution can be squeezed or extracted out of them only by something like violence or a surgical operation. They give only because they feel they must and do not dare refuse lest they lose social or business standing or incur some other penalty. These grudging givers are a discouragement and vexation to others and are a misery to themselves.

Whatever they give to others is so much loss to themselves and hurts them terribly.

They are not really thinking of the necessities of others and the good they may do, but only of their own comfort and good. The currents of their life are not flowing outward in healthy sympathy and generosity, but inward in morbid self-consciousness and selfishness. Such gifts do the giver no good and may be despised of men and offensive to God. It is the cheerful gift that goes far and heals and blesses whatever it touches.

God loves a cheerful giver because he is a cheerful giver himself.

He dips his hands in floods of light and flings it through the universe in boundless prodigality. He embowers the earth in beauty and hides in its soil unnumbered harvests. He giveth to all life and breath and his tender mercies are over all his works.

He gave his Son for the redemption of his lost children and the Cross is red with the blood of his heart.

The Lord would have a hard time of it if he begrudged his mercies and every gift cost him a pang. But his nature flows outward and giving is his life and joy.

We have not penetrated into the secret of giving until we have discovered through experience that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How did the saints in Jerusalem come to be poor?
2. Why are some people more liberal than others?
3. In what ways can we give our own selves to others?
4. What is systematic beneficence?
5. How can we become cheerful givers?

LESSON IV—OCTOBER 28

Paul's Last Journey to Jerusalem

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Our Pastor Does for us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul, Shepherd of the Churches.

Golden Text: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35.

Devotional Reading: John 10:10–17.

Lesson Passage: Acts 20:1–21:17; II Cor. 11:28.

Lesson Text: Acts 20:17–21, 28–38; II Cor. 11:28

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time,

19 Serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews;

20 How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.

29 I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 And from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears.

32 And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build *you* up, and to give *you* the inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

33 I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.

28 Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Danger Ahead.*
2. *Parting Words.*
3. *Weighty Counsels.*
4. *Warning Admonitions.*
5. *Practical Philanthropy.*

Paul was now returning from his third missionary journey, carrying the collection he had gathered for the poor in Jerusalem, and was hastening to reach that city before Pentecost.

He was making his farewell tour among his churches and this address to the Ephesians is a sample of his parting words.

The ship on which he was traveling stayed a few days at Miletus, a port thirty miles from Ephesus, where the Ephesian elders came to see their former pastor and receive his last counsels.

In this tender address we see Paul's heart.

Parting words are notably pathetic words, and Paul here sweeps the mystic chords of feeling with a master hand. The mighty apostle, who is of logic all compact and can grip minds in the iron vice of his intellect, melts his friends into tears and touches all hearts.

1. Danger Ahead

After a brief outline of his work and experience among the Ephesians Paul announces whither he is going and the purpose that is driving him on. He was going bound in the spirit, constrained by a strong sense of duty, to Jerusalem, not knowing what would befall him there except that he was sure of bonds and afflictions and that they would see his face no more.

We are ever moving towards an unknown future, every morning is a new mystery, and though we know not what shall befall us we know our path at times will run through dark days.

But it matters not what whither we are going and what awaits us, if we are moved by a clear sense of duty and are sure that the Lord is leading us on.

Paul had grown used to bonds and afflictions and was not surprised there were more of them to come. Such a prospect would have turned many a man back, but these were obstructions slight as spider threads across Paul's path and could not stay him a single step. He knew that he ought to go up to Jerusalem and thither he was bound to go.

Danger could never change his duty, and he held even his life of no account when balanced against conscience.

It is of such stuff that heroes are made. Bonds may bind their bodies and swords may sever their heads, but cowardice never withers their courage, and even though they are slain their souls go marching on.

One purpose moved Paul with masterful force, as icebergs are driven against wind and current by deeper currents in which their bases are submerged. He was too near the end of his life to mar it with a misstep, the victory was too nearly won for him to turn coward to his conscience and beat a retreat. His life stood before him as a temple approaching completion and he did not want his hand to fail him while putting on the finishing touches.

To accomplish our course and fulfill the ministry God has given us, to round out our life to completeness, is an ideal that should inspire and drive us on through discouragement and danger to final victory.

2. Parting Words

In pathetic words Paul announces that his friends shall see his face no more, and before giving them his farewell counsel he appeals to his own past faithfulness. He testified that he was pure from their blood, for he had not shrunk from declaring unto them anything that was profitable and had taught them both publicly and privately "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

God has given us a counsel to declare, a duty to discharge for the profit of others, and when we shrink from it or fall short of it we bring their blood upon ourselves.

It had cost Paul something to be faithful in Ephesus. The three years he spent in that city were burdened with toil and temptation and trial. It was there that the shrine manufacturers stirred up a mob against him and that Alexander the coppersmith had done him "a lot of harm."

He might have shrunk from preaching the gospel so as to hurt business and have toned it down so as to avoid offense, but he never relaxed a word.

The work cost Paul heavily then, but the record of it was worth much to him now.

His conscience was his comfort to him in the present because he had been faithful to it in the past.

Our yesterdays are ever coming back to give us courage and comfort to-day, or to weaken and plague us with their unfaithfulness.

If through all our years we shrink not from duty our record will stand behind us as a source of strength and satisfaction forever.

3. Weighty Counsels

Paul now gives the Ephesian elders some weighty counsels. "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood."

While this admonition is especially appropriate to ministers, elders and teachers in the church, yet it also applies to all believers who are priests unto God.

We are ever first to take heed unto ourselves, for unless we look after ourselves first we cannot look after others.

We teach more by what we are than by what we say, and from the inmost core of our character shoot influences that help to make or mar those around us. We must first feed ourselves with truth and prayer and service and then we may feed others.

Yet we cannot take care of ourselves in the best way without also taking care of others.

Too little or too much self-care is an injury. The care of self and the care of others must be blended into mutual help and harmony.

Our flock are all those within our influence and the fold widens until it reaches the rim of the planet.

To feed others and not simply to be fed is our mission.

"A bishop," says Ruskin, "is a person who sees: a pastor means one who feeds. The most unbishoply character a man can have is, therefore, to be blind: the most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed. Nearly all the evils in the church have arisen from bishops desiring power more than light. They want authority, not outlook. The bishop's office is to oversee the flock, to number it sheep by sheep to be ready always to give full account of it."

We are to feed others, not with selfishness and unkindness that bring bitterness and death, but with truth and sympathy and service that bring life more abundant.

A strong motive to faithfulness to the flock is that the church of the Lord has been purchased with his own blood and therefore is precious to him.

4. Warning Admonitions

This word of counsel is next followed by a word of warning. Where there are sheep there are also wolves, and these will enter the fold and ravage the flock.

The church has enemies from without, false teachings, worldliness and sin, that are ever creeping into it. Even more dangerous are the enemies that arise within the church, speaking perverse things in doctrine and polity that disturb its peace and destroy its power.

One Achan within the camp defeated Israel, and one troubler within the church is enough to distract and weaken it.

The worst wolves are those that wear sheep's clothing and thus deceive the unwary. We are to be on our guard against evil that comes to us under the name of good. The devil himself can appear as an angel of light.

Against these enemies without and within we are to watch.

Watching an enemy often disarms him of his power to harm us. It is the unobserved thief that sneaks in through darkness and steals, or criminal who slips up behind his unsuspecting victim and deals him a fatal blow.

Temptations that are not watched creep up behind us and catch us unawares.

A man is hardly ever overcome by a temptation while he is looking it fairly in the face and considering its evil: it is when he forgets it that it gets him.

"Watch" is a frequent and solemn word in Scripture and it is one of the vital duties of the Christian life.

Many a railway train has been wrecked because the engineer did not watch, because the pilot did not watch many a ship has been lost, and many a merchant has been ruined because he did not watch his business.

Many a man has lost his soul because he did not put on the whole armor of God and watch the devil.

Officers and members of the church should watch against the appearance of evil and kill it in the bud.

Paul bids the Ephesians remember his own watching over them when for three years he ceased not to warn them night and day with tears.

Warning and weeping were his means of watching them; he combined truth with tenderness and dipped his arrows in his tears.

Merely correcting and scolding the tempted and erring are a poor way of warning them: we must bind ourselves to them in sympathy and mingle our tears with their trials. If we were as earnest as we ought to be in warning the tempted and lost, we would more often weep over them and with them.

As the strongest safeguard against these enemies, Paul commended his Ephesian brethren to God and to the word of his grace, which was able to build them up and to give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

We are secure against danger without and within only as our lives are hid with Christ in God.

Then we dwell in the secret place of the Most High and are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

5. Practical Philanthropy

Paul closes his address with a word on the subject of the care of the weak and needy. This was always a present and pressing matter among

these early Christians that were generally deep in poverty and persecution.

The times were always hard with them and the spirit of mutual help grew throughout the church as one of the first fruits of the gospel.

Paul, as usual, opens this point with a reference to his own practice. He had coveted no man's silver or gold, but had labored with his own hands to support himself and them that were with him. No one, then, could insinuate that he was moved by a mercenary motive in introducing the matter.

He had first done himself what he was urging them to do and was asking nothing for himself.

He then followed up his injunction with a saying of the Lord Jesus which is not recorded in the gospels and is one of numberless sayings of his that were lost: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

This is one of the most splendid utterances that ever fell from the lips of Jesus and expresses the essence and root of the gospel.

He had a right to say this, for with him it was no fine theory and beautiful sentiment merely, but it was his own practice and experience in giving himself for the life of the world.

It is good to receive, and this is one of the duties and privileges of life, but it is better to give, for this expands and enriches the soul. The shortsighted, sordid soul thinks that what it receives is clear gain and what it gives is so much loss. But the truth is often just the reverse of this bad bookkeeping, and right giving is always richer gain.

It is literally true of mental and moral and spiritual goods that as we give them we get them and thus they multiply in our hands as did the loaves beside the sea.

If we trusted this Christlike principle and practiced it more, it would cure us of much of our selfishness and sordidness and misery and let our liberated souls out into the glorious liberty and life of the Son of God.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give a brief account of Paul's stay and labors in Ephesus.
2. How should we part from friends when Providence separates us?
3. Where shall we find the wisest counsels?
4. Is there any unkindness in grave warnings?
5. Was Paul's philanthropy an illustration of the social gospel?

LESSON V—NOVEMBER 4

World's Temperance Sunday

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Reasons for Prohibition.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Standing for Law Enforcement.

Golden Text: Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law. Romans 13:10.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 15.

Lesson Passage: Romans 13:1–14.

Lesson Text: Romans 13:1–10, 13–14

1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God.

2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same:

4 For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due;* custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

8 Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law.

13 Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Duty of Citizenship.

2. Love the Fulfilling of the Law.

3. A Worthy Life.

4. Putting on the Lord Jesus.

The Bible does not usually single our particular sins and vices and give them separate treatment; it rather deals with them as branches of a common root, and it is this root that it is after and seeks to exterminate. All the branches might be destroyed and yet no permanent good be done, for they might all come back again. But destroy the root and the evil is ended; nothing will come back.

Sin is more than the sum of all sins, as the root is more than all the branches.

However all virtues and all vices are woven together, so that every virtue is a friend of temperance and every vice is an ally of intemperance.

On this principle we draw inferences and make applications in the interest of temperance, but we should clearly distinguish between the direct teachings of Scripture and our adaptations.

Paul, in this letter written at Corinth to the Romans near the end of his third missionary journey, adorns its massive theology with many passages of practical application and tenderness and beauty; and while this lesson only mentions intemperance incidentally, yet its whole teaching powerfully conduces to this virtue.

1. The Duty of Citizenship

The duty of citizenship is enjoined at length and in detail.

Government is a foundation of orderly society without which it would fall into chaos and anarchy.

Remove it and the vast invisible roof over us protecting us day and night would come crashing down and involve us all in its ruins. Life, liberty and property would be subject to every murderer's gun and robber's hand.

It is therefore a primary duty that every one be subject to these higher powers.

In so far as we refuse or fail to be loyal citizens obeying the laws we are undermining all law and order. And we must not pick and choose among our laws as to which ones we will obey while we disregard others, but we must be faithful to all.

This principle applies to our temperance legislation in general and in particular to our Eighteenth Amendment and the laws of enforcement growing out of it.

It stands written in our national constitution and its obligation is upon us. We may object to it and advocate and work for its annulment in a legal way, but may not privately annul it ourselves.

Paul lived under a pagan government that was despotic and corrupt and was cruelly hostile to his Christian worship, but he recognized its divine right to rule and always was loyal to its laws.

He enjoined paying "tribute" or the Roman taxes, which were heavy and often corruptly exacted, but they were a part of his duty as a citizen.

We are generally disposed to grumble at our taxes and many have no compunction of conscience in evading them, but they are a part of our duty as Christian citizens, and in few things do we get as much for our money as for our taxes.

We are also bidden to render "honor" to our officials, treat them with the respect due to their position. At this point also we often fail and treat them with disrespect and ridicule and may even heap upon them insult and every form of opprobrium.

We dishonor our government and nation and ourselves by such treatment of these powers that "are ordained of God."

Loyal citizenship is a Christian duty and should be faithfully rendered at every point.

2. Love the Fulfilling of the Law

Love as the fulfilling of the law is enjoined and illustrated. Debts are generally a bad thing, but there is one debt that ought always to stand charged up against us—love to one another.

This we owe to every human being and the more this debt is paid the more it grows.

In paying this debt we pay off all other obligations, for love carries with it every duty and blessing, as the sunbeam carries in its bosom all colors and beauty, or as the root of the rosebush has in it all the roses of June.

The Ten Commandments are each a special application of this principle.

Adultery, murder, theft, falsehood, are all terrible violations of love. These commandments are all summed up in the principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

It seems strange to find self-love put as the center from which our love to others is to flow and made the standard by which it is to be measured, but this is a true principle.

Self-preservation as a rule comes first. We must develop and appreciate our own worth before we can have any worth with which to love others. The value of our love depends upon what we have to give, and self-love conserves personal worth and becomes rich so that it can give much.

Some people cannot love others because they have burnt all the virtue out of themselves and are only cinders and have nothing to give.

But the danger of self-love is that it will become self-contained and grow into selfishness. Its health consists in flowing out into other lives. The worth that self-love has stored up in ourselves is to be a fountain that will gush forth in streams and make the world green.

The good will that we bestow upon ourselves we are to bestow upon others.

This will restrain mutual injuries.

It will constrain us, not by a harsh outward restriction but by an inward joyous impulse, to protect and promote the welfare of others at every point, and thus it will fulfill the whole law.

Intemperance violates the principle of self-love in every way.

It begins by making war on the drinker himself. Instead of being true self-love, it is the deadliest self-destruction. It empties a man of all worth so that he has nothing with which to love others. It tramples upon all the commandments which love enjoins as the necessary laws of life. It works ill to its neighbor, to wife and children and society.

It blights every green thing and leaves no soil and place for the blossom of love to grow.

But let the love of God dwell in their hearts and bind them into brotherhood and men will cease to do this evil and will learn to do well.

3. A Worthy Life

These principles are to be carried down into daily life. The Christian is to "walk becomingly." The word means after a comely manner, a well-shaped form. It describes a life that it is fitting in its character and conduct, a shapely handsome life, one that conforms to the finest ideal.

The Christian has no right to be misshapen, deficient and deformed, but should be well-rounded in every virtue, presenting an attractive character and life.

"As in the day." There is no place in the Christian life for concealed ends and secret methods. Such things hide themselves in darkness.

But Christianity does nothing in a corner. It is open and aboveboard in all its objectives and means.

It says outright what it aims at and lets all the world see what it is doing.

In this respect it stood in sharp contrast with many of the heathen cults or "mystery religions" which were conducted in secret and many of which were dark in their ways and bad in their reputation. Paul knew about these clandestine cults with their hidden rites and "night-life," and he is excluding such ways and means from the Christian life.

The Christian is to live an open life, free from concealment and indirection.

This does not mean that every part of his life is to be exposed to publicity, but he is to conceal nothing that being revealed would cover him with shame, and nothing in his private life is to be of a different piece and color from his public life.

He is to be the same man with the same character in public and in private and all the way through.

He does not pose as a temperance man in public and keep wine to be used as a beverage concealed in his house. If he abstains in public he abstains also in private, and everywhere people know what he is, for he walks "as in the day."

Such living excludes reveling and drunkenness, impurity and lust. These flagrant and shocking vices are in violent antagonism with the Christian life.

No one can do these things and name the name of Christ.

Yet Christians sometimes fall into them and unless they repent and are restored they make shipwreck of their faith and life.

The danger of these vices is in their smallest beginnings.

Drunkenness is a harvest of many drinks that began with a single sup that was the seed of many cups. The last glass cannot stop the first one, but the first one can stop the last one. Touch not your lips with the unclean thing, keep your hand off the fascinating fatal cup, and your unclouded brain will never see strange visions and your firm feet will not reel and stagger into a drunkard's grave.

But the Christian must not only guard against these coarse vices, but inner spiritual sins are forbidden as well.

Strife and jealousy are seeds that grow up into scarlet blossoms and bear bitter fruit.

Not only must the life be kept clean, but the heart also must be kept pure, for out of it are all the issues of life.

4. Putting on the Lord Jesus

The grand cure for intemperance and for all sins is Christian character, the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart.

The leprosy of sin cannot be cured by healing spots on the skin: the disease is in the blood and must be eradicated. An apple tree cannot be made fruitful by tying rosy apples on its branches: the root must pulse with life and pour the right juices and flavors through buds and blossoms into the ripening fruit.

Intemperance is always a surface spot showing poison in the blood.

Every sin is a symptom of structural weakness in the system.

When a great bridge comes crashing down or a giant tree falls in the forest, the fault was not in the paint on the steel beams or a crack in the bark on the trunk, but deeper in the structure of the bridge or tree. Some weak part in the bridge, or some rottenness eating at the heart of the tree, wrought the fall and ruin.

Drunkenness has deep roots in the life and habits of years.

It may grow out of hereditary structural weakness running back through generations.

Therefore the gospel does not stop at superficial symptoms and forms of sin, but strikes deep into the heart at the root of all sin.

Its temperance pledge is a new heart.

Its amended constitution is a regenerated personal constitution.

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." This strong expression denotes the complete assumption of the nature of Christ, the fusing of his spirit with ours, so that we think his thoughts and manifest his character and live his life.

Through faith in and fellowship with Christ we may acquire his spirit until we are fashioned into his mind and wear his likeness. We live, and yet not we, but Christ liveth in us. Then his life flows out spontaneously through our character and conduct, and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we glorify him.

Impurity cannot grow in such a soil. Intemperance is no temptation to it. Such a character presents a solid front against the works of darkness.

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the devil can find nothing in you to lay hold of, and after breaking his lance against your armor of light he will flee from you into the infinite darkness whence he came.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Did Paul appreciate and profit by his Roman citizenship?
2. How does the government of the Roman Empire compare with ours?
3. What advantages do we derive from government?
4. Does the government have a right to forbid the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drink?
5. Are the evils of intoxicating drink increasing or decreasing under prohibition?
6. What is the radical cure for intemperance?

LESSON VI—NOVEMBER 11

Peace and Good Will Among Men

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Promote Good Will.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Message and Program of World Peace.

Golden Text: Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 2:5–11.

Lesson Passage: Romans 12:1–21.

Lesson Text: Romans 12:1–2, 9–21

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service,

2 And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another;

11 In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing stedfastly in prayer;

13 Communicating to the necessities of the saints; given to hospitality.

14 Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to things that are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men.

19 Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath *of God:* for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord.

20 But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Body and Mind.***
2. ***Love.***
3. ***Zeal.***
4. ***Hope and Patience.***
5. ***Things That Are Lowly.***
6. ***Enemies.***

The Epistle to the Romans is Paul's masterpiece in which all his matchless powers of thought and eloquence are expended on the profoundest problems of the gospel. The first eleven chapters are full of the twisted and knotted roots of theology; with the twelfth chapter these roots begin to blossom and to bear some of the sweet flowers and rich fruits of the Christian life.

Our lesson falls on Armistice Day which is an international holiday that will grow in importance with the years.

It is a day on which to emphasize the things that "promote good will" and the principles of this lesson can be turned into a "message and program of world peace."

1. Body and Mind

Paul begins with the fundamentals of personality in the consecration to God of the body and the mind. The body is the instrument of all our actions and may be taken as representing our outer life.

It is of high value and dignity, God has redeemed it, and we have no right to injure or defile or turn it to any wrong use.

Such consecration of our body is our spiritual service, for every material thing has spiritual affinities and uses and is to be transmuted into higher life.

The mind is the seat of the inner life.

Consecration to God has not reached the whole man until it has filled the mind and gone down into the deepest roots of being. One cannot really give anything to God until he has given him his heart; for it is the inner motives that give purpose and power to all outer acts.

A strong and subtle temptation with us is to be conformed to this world, to adopt the opinions and customs of the day, as the chameleon changes its color to match its environment, instead of being governed only by truth and right.

This destroys our independence and individuality of character and merges us in the worldly crowd.

The danger is to be met and overcome by being transformed by the renewing of the mind that we may prove or discern what is the good and perfect will of God.

In the tangled affairs of life in which good and evil are often closely woven and knotted together, a renewed mind filled with the spirit of Christ can pick out and separate the threads of truth and duty and weave them into a beautiful garment of holiness.

Such a mind is not only needed in our private lives, but is the fundamental condition in solving international problems of peace and war.

2. Love

The Christian root of life quickly blooms into love. "Let love be without hypocrisy;" literally, let love be without the actor's mask. The appearance of love may be put on like paint that is only skin deep and rubs off.

There may be a great show of courtesy and affection and fuss outwardly while inwardly the heart rankles with envy or hate. The smoothest words and sweetest smiles may hide the bitterest malice. The forms of fashionable etiquette are often a hollow mockery, and the actor's mask is frequently worn in society.

Strip off your mask, says Paul, and let your love show its own face.

Have genuine affection, and then let it come out and show itself in your manners as the beautiful veins and colors come out on the surface of polished stones. Let us tear off all this pretense and sham and deal with one another on the basis of truth and reality.

Simple genuine manners that come from the heart are more pleasing than the most effusive and pompous airs that are tainted with insincerity. Love that is put on like a savage's paint goes no deeper into the life and has no moral worth.

Love shows itself in being "tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another." It does not rush in and grab the best place, but puts another's honor and comfort before its own. It sees that others are seated before it takes its own seat and hands the morning newspaper to some one else first.

Love has a quick eye and a deft hand for preferring another and it embroiders all life with beautiful behavior.

3. Zeal

Zeal is the next virtue that grows out of this Christian root. "In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

There is a great deal of slothful lazy Christianity among us.

If many a man managed his business with the same inattention and irregularity as he does his religion, he would run straight into bankruptcy. There is need of business push and punctuality in our religion, doing everything diligently and on time. When the Bible is not our daily bread and prayer is not our daily practice, when attendance at the church service is uncertain and intermittent, the soul sinks into sloth and our religion becomes a reminiscence and relic.

The almanac and clock are important regulators in our work, and they are not less important in our worship.

Diligence in serving the Lord will make us spiritually rich, but religious laziness leads to leanness of soul.

The diligent man is fervent, boiling, as the word means. There is fire in him and his spirit boils. The religion of some people is a refrigerant. They keep their Christianity on ice. Such religious icicles chill the church and put a frost on faith and fervor all around them.

The Holy Spirit baptizes with fire.

On the day of Pentecost tongues like as of fire sat on each of the disciples, and great saints have always been burning men. There should be some enthusiasm in us that will warm us up and at times make us boil. We are growing so formal and chilled that we sometimes sit in church as though we were frozen solid. We need to have the fire of zeal kindled within us and our spiritual thermometer sent up to the boiling point, and then we will begin to move things and will radiate heat and life.

Yet diligence and zeal are good only as they are exercised in a good cause.

Some men are extremely diligent and zealous in serving the devil, but activities are right and good only as they are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

4. Hope and Patience

The Christian spirit runs on through this passage and continues to blossom.

The believer rejoices in hope.

He hides a great hope in his heart that inspires him with courage and cheer. The deepest root of joy is the faith that fills all the future with hope. No theory of life can give permanent joy that does not have a sure promise for to-morrow and the vast forever.

> **Christian hope has the grandest future in the universe, even the fullness of God, and therefore it is an unfailing fountain of joy.**

Having such hope the believer is patient in tribulation.

The "tribulum" or threshing flail of temptation and trial falls upon him in as severe blows as upon other men, but he is patient under it because he knows it is wielded by a wise and loving hand. As the flail beats and separates the grain from the chaff, so tribulations sent of God separate the chaff of the world from the soul.

> **Patience is being still when it is hard to be still; and the highest and most blessed patience is to let God beat us as he will and yet possess our souls in peace.**

The believer is able to be patient because he continues steadfastly in prayer, his human strength has divine roots; he hides his life with Christ in God and is strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

> **Prayer does not take trial away from us, but it gives us more patience and power to bear it; it carries us into the secret place of the Most High, where we grow calm and strong under the shadow of the Almighty.**

How much could hope and patience do towards maintaining world peace and progress? If nations were more hopeful of one another's good intentions and were more patient with one another, not resorting to quick action and fateful words and blows, most if not all causes of friction could be adjusted and even wars could be averted.

> **Peace is a state of mind, and international peace is preëminently a mind of hope and patience and good will.**

5. Things That are Lowly

Passing on over some other points, let us note what Paul says on the relative values of things. "Set not your mind on high things, but

condescend to things that are lowly," or as it reads on the margin of the Revised Version, "be carried away with things that are lowly."

The meaning is that we should be swept off our feet in a gale of enthusiasm for common things, humble service.

Some of these Roman Christians were evidently seeking high things, such as wealth, social standing, prominent positions, conspicuous influence. They had no use and patience and respect for common things. Paul bids them correct their standards, revise their estimates of relative values, and be carried away with things that are lowly.

This is a lesson we greatly need.

We covet earnestly the best gifts, and by the best gifts we mean wealth, social standing, office and influence. We have a distaste for the common and obscure and crave the conspicuous and brilliant. Lowly services kill ambition, we think, and doom us to drudgery. We cannot do anything of interest and worth in a humble place with common materials: we must get up into a high place and have richer materials, and then we shall achieve great results.

This instinct of striving upward is right. It contains the promise and potency of all progress. But it needs education. It is right for us to covet the best things, but we are apt to be wrong in our definition of the best things.

Paul puts us right at this point with his truer standard of values.

The things we count uninteresting and worthless have in them possibilities that, if we would only study and see into and develop them, would carry us away with a gale of enthusiasm.

The artist and poet do not ask for fine things with which to produce their masterpieces, but they take common canvas and paint or the common things that lie around us, and illuminate and glorify them with their insight and imagination and are carried away by them to the heights of their most glorious achievements.

The commonest duty, the humblest deed, may be polished until it shines as a jewel and then its uncommon beauty will elicit the praise and wonder of many that never suspected its worth before.

6. Enemies

Love for enemies is one of the finest and most difficult fruits of the Christian life.

Even a sinner loves friends, but it takes a saint to love enemies.

To be struck and not to strike back, to be reviled and not to revile again, is a victory that lifts us close to Christ. Kindness kills enmity, Many an enemy has been turned into a friend by a generous word or act. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

This is the philosophy of growth in grace.

The way to crowd out evil is to crowd good in. These two principles are struggling within us and one must kill the other: we are each one to say which of these two principles is to win the victory over us.

The same two principles are struggling in the field of international relations, and the problem of world peace depends upon individual citizens and nations endeavoring to spread the message and spirit of good will by which evil will be overcome with good. Such a spirit of good will diffused throughout the world is a stronger safeguard against war and insurance of peace than any number of armies and armaments.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How much does the body have to do with determining our mind and heart?
2. In what sense are we to love one another? Can we love everybody?
3. By what means can we kindle our zeal?
4. Give other instances of the value of lowly things.
5. How can we promote peace and good will among nations?

LESSON VII—NOVEMBER 18

Paul's Experiences in Jerusalem

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul Proves His Courage.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Religious Prejudice and Fanaticism.

Golden Text: Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 6:10–20.

Lesson Passage: Acts 21:17–23:35.

Lesson Text: Acts 21:37–22:1, 22–29

37 And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek?

38 Art thou not then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins?

39 But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, saying,

1 Brethren and fathers, hear ye, the defence which I now make unto you.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word; and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and threw off their garments, and cast dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him.

25 And when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 And when the centurion heard it, he went to the chief captain and told him, saying, What art thou about to do? for this man is a Roman.

27 And the chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship. And Paul said, But I am *a Roman* born.

29 They then that were about to examine him straightway departed from him: and the chief captain also was afraid when he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Paul and the Roman Captain.

2. Paul's Speech on the Stairway.

3. A Violent Interruption.

4. The Magic of Roman Citizenship.

5. A Roman Born.

From his farewell meeting with the Ephesian elders Paul passed on up to Jerusalem where the trouble he had predicted soon began. He was kindly received of the brethren and hastened to pay his respects to James and the elders of the church. A narrative of his labors among the Gentiles again drew from them thanksgiving and praise unto God.

The Church seemed to be united and harmonious, and yet the old antagonism between conservatives and liberals was working beneath the surface.

Some of the elders explained to Paul that many of the Jewish Christians were zealous for the Mosaic law and were suspicious of his orthodoxy, having heard that he rejected Moses altogether; and they proposed that he go into the Temple with four brethren that had taken a vow, and, by thus appearing with them and bearing their expenses, disarm these criticisms.

Paul, according to his practice of being all things to all men when no principle was sacrificed, complied with this request.

The next day, while in the Temple with these Nazarites, he was spied by some Asiatic Jews, probably some of those that had opposed him at Ephesus, who immediately seized him and began to shout, "Men of Israel, help!" declaring that he was the man that everywhere rejected Moses and had defiled the Temple by bringing Greeks into its sacred precincts.

Instantly there was a tremendous Oriental uproar. Paul was dragged down into the Court of the Gentiles and was being beaten, when a squad of Roman soldiers rushed down out of the tower of the barracks overlooking the Temple court and rescued him. Paul was about to be brought into the castle, when our lesson opens.

1. Paul and the Roman Captain

While on the stairway Paul said to the captain, "May I say something unto thee?" This simple question proved to be the turning point in the tide. The captain expressed surprise that the prisoner had addressed him in Greek, the language of culture, and said he supposed he was a certain Egyptian that had recently stirred up rebellion. Paul answered, "I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city."

Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia and a free Roman city, noted for

its schools of literature and philosophy and ranked next to Athens and Alexandria among university towns.

Paul had a just pride in his native city. He was a true patriot.

He was not afraid or ashamed of his record. He was willing that his critics and enemies should go to the city where he had been brought up and see how he had lived.

Many a man under arrest conceals the city to which he belongs, but Paul had nothing to conceal.

Nothing could catch and compel the attention of the Roman officer quicker than Paul's announcement of his citizenship in a Roman town, and he was now ready to treat his prisoner in a different manner.

Having thus got the ear of the Roman officer, what did Paul request of him? That he would let his soldiers loose on the frenzied mob, shouting for Paul's life, to slaughter them and thus extinguish their cries in their blood? No, his request was, "I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people."

How magnificently does Paul's Christian spirit rise above any thought of revenge or even of justice towards his enemies, and how grandly does his heart go out towards them in love!

Standing on that stairway in the face of that howling mob he showed the spirit of him who not far away from that very spot prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and where Paul himself had heard Stephen's expiring prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Paul wanted no Roman sword or chain for his enemies, but he only wanted to speak to them in words of truth and kindness and love.

This spirit is still the great need of the world in this day when "songs of hate" have not yet died out of our ears, and it is the only cure for our lives of selfishness and strife.

2. Paul's Speech on the Stairway

Paul's speech and defense consisted of a plain statement of facts, setting forth his own experience. He began by describing himself as a Jew of the strictest sect and then told the story of how he had persecuted the Christians, in proof of which he appealed to the witness of the high

priest and elders. Paul was no stranger to these people, and they had personal knowledge of these facts and knew he was telling the truth.

He next proceeded to tell the story of his conversion on his way to Damascus and how he was brought to "one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews," showing that he had not been consorting with heretics. Ananias told him that "the God of our fathers" had appointed him to be a witness of the Righteous One, and again he showed that he had been under orthodox guidance. He then told how he came to Jerusalem and that while he "prayed in the temple," a truly orthodox thing to do, he fell into a trance and "saw him" bidding him to depart from Jerusalem and saying, "Depart: for I will send thee forth unto the Gentiles."

Thus Paul showed that all the way through he had been loyal to the law; he had not departed from the faith of their fathers, but had simply acted under divine guidance.

The logic of his defense was that as a faithful Jew he could not have done otherwise.

3. A Violent Interruption

At this point Paul was interrupted.

He was used to interruption and had often had his voice drowned in an outburst of derision or of scorn and hatred.

There is a number of interrupted speeches in the Bible and it is interesting to note the point at which they are broken off. It was at the point of the resurrection that the Athenians laughed at Paul on Mars' Hill, and it was the spirituality of his teaching that sent many of his disciples away from Jesus (John 6:66).

"And they gave him audience unto this word," and this fatal word was the word "Gentiles." Paul skillfully kept this word to the very last, although he was hinting at it and moving towards it all the time, and then shot it out with intense force as the chief point and climax of his speech.

Instantly it fell as a spark upon powder and created a tremendous explosion.

Paul did not get another word out, for the silence with which he had been listened to up to this word suddenly burst into a terrible uproar

and the Temple Court became a sea of fanaticism lashing itself into the fury and foam of madness, men throwing off their clothing and flinging dust into the air and wildly shouting, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."

The word "Gentiles" acted as a deadly insult and unspeakable exasperation to the Jews: it struck down all their superiority and special privileges and favoritism as the chosen people of God; it obliterated all distinction between clean and unclean and reduced all to one common level.

Centuries of exclusiveness had bred in them pride of birth and privilege that could not brook the shadow of a Gentile.

Here was a Jew that threw open the doors of God's kingdom to the hated and despised Gentiles and recognized them as brethren: instantly he became "fellow" that was not fit to live.

The Jews were not the only people that have been guilty of this sin. The same spirit of selfish exclusiveness and pride is still one of the deepest divisions and greatest obstacles in the way of brotherhood among men, and lurks in us.

4. The Magic of Roman Citizenship

In the midst of the confusion the Roman officer slipped Paul into the tower. The Roman did not understand Hebrew and did not know what the uproar was about, but supposed that the prisoner must be a bad if not a dangerous character and that he would do well to investigate the case.

Torture was the usual Roman method of finding out truth. Paul was "tied up," "stretched" as the word means, in order that he might be whipped with a scourge, a whip of leather with bits of metal woven into the lash so that every stroke would cut and bring blood.

Just at this juncture Paul quietly asked a question that suddenly put a new face on affairs. "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

The centurion hurried to the chief captain, the captain hurried back to the prisoner and immediately the thongs were taken off. The word "Roman" had done it as if by magic.

This was the open sesame that everywhere acted as a charm throughout the empire. Wherever the Roman citizen went there followed and stood over him the mighty protection of Cæsar. Paul always enjoined subjection to the higher powers and now he claimed the protection of such power himself. There are times when names and rights are worth something.

We Americans inherit a name that we should hold high in honor and wherever we go around the globe that name is respected and will defend us.

The name that is above every name, that is worth most and carries with it the highest dignity and safety and blessing, is the name Christian.

5. A Roman Born

An interesting bit of conversation passed between Paul and the captain with reference to Roman citizenship. When Paul said he was a citizen the captain said, "With a great sum obtained I this citizenship." And Paul answered, "But I am a Roman born." Roman citizenship could be bought and sometimes enormous sums were paid for it.

Our citizenship has also been bought with a price.

Liberty has cost life laid down through the centuries and the liberty we enjoy to-day is red with the blood of generations. The first men that purchased this liberty paid for it a great sum in substance and suffering. Paul, however, was a Roman born: what had cost others so much had cost him nothing. This is true of our citizenship from some points of view. The liberty for which our fathers fought and died, we breathe as our native air.

Their blood has become our unconscious blessing.

Our whole civilization, institutions and wealth, science and art, learning and libraries, has come down to us as a vast inheritance into which we were born. Other men labored and we are entered into their labors.

The kingdom of eternal life, which Christ purchased for us with his blood, is thrown open to us without money and without price.

Citizenship in any kingdom of science and art costs study and toil, and the kingdom of heaven must be taken by violence. We are born Americans, but not Christians. We become Christians by rebirth.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Let us appreciate our heavenly citizenship that has cost an infinite price and yet is our free inheritance, and honor it in our lives and endeavor to extend it throughout the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. To what extent did Paul abandon and in what points did he keep the system of Moses?
2. Was he inconsistent in going into the Temple with the men who were fulfilling a vow (21:23–26)?
3. What is religious fanaticism and do we still have it among us?
4. Have we yet acquired the right attitude and spirit towards those who are "Gentiles" to us?
5. Are there those who despise the name "Christian," and if so, why?

LESSON VIII—NOVEMBER 25

The Prayers of Paul

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul as a Man of Prayer.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Place of Prayer in Paul's Life.

Golden Text: Rejoice always; pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks. I Thess. 1:2–5.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 34:1–8.

Lesson Passage: Acts 20:36–38; Rom. 1:8–20; Ephe. 1:15–23; 3:14–21; I Thess. 5:16–18.

Lesson Text: Acts 20:36–38; Ephe. 1:15–16; 3:14–21

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.
37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,
38 Sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.

15 For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which *ye show* toward all the saints,
16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention *of you* in my prayers.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,
15 From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man;
17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 May be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
19 And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
21 Unto him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Paul and His Ephesian Friends.***
2. ***Prayer unto the Father.***
3. ***Strengthened in the Inward Man.***
4. ***Filled Unto the Fullness of God.***
5. ***Glory unto God in the Church and in Christ.***

What was the secret of Paul's wonderful life? Where did he get his strength?

All great things spring out of hidden sources.

There is enormous heat in the depths of the sun out of which all its shooting flames and far-shining light come, the mountains rest on bases that match their majestic mass and height, and the gigantic Redwood has giant roots that produced and sustain its towering trunk.

A great man must also have a deep base and roots to his life.

Luther, Washington, Lincoln,—these men did not grow out of a thin soil but had sources and secrets of strength that were hidden deep. All their outer activities were but the manifestation of their inner life.

Paul hid his life with Christ in God and lived in communion and fellowship with the Father of spirits.
Prayer was the secret of his power.

1. Paul and His Ephesian Friends

We have already seen, in Lesson IV, that Paul while returning from his third missionary journey stopped at Miletus, near Ephesus, where the Ephesian elders came to meet him and received his farewell words.

It was a pathetic scene in which he spoke to them words of final instruction and warning.

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all." The great apostle and pastor of these people whom he had converted to the Christian faith and had organized into a little Christian church, now took them into his arms of faith and bore them up to God in prayer.

Important as are preaching and teaching in the church, not less vital is prayer in public worship and prayer meeting and Sunday school as well as in our personal and private life and relations. It brings us into close and fresh contact with the Spirit of God and kindles in us the feelings of dependence and submission, faith and fellowship, aspiration and holy ambition that are the very essence and life of religion.

We thus hide and lose our life in God, our thoughts slip into the same channel with his thoughts and our wills coincide with his. Never does the soul rise to loftier heights and get closer to God and become more deeply merged in him and filled with him than in the holy ecstasy of prayer.

Things mean so much more when said to God in the intimacy of prayer.

The minister's prayer in the pulpit often suggests more than his sermon, and at the funeral a tender prayer is more comforting than a voluble discourse.

We are given another view of Paul's intimacy with his Ephesian friends in his Epistle written to them afterwards at Rome. In the first brief selection in our lesson from this Epistle we learn that Paul had great comfort in their faith of which he had heard and that he ceased not to give thanks for them.

Is not this the best reward of the minister and teacher, that his people and scholars are abiding in the faith so that they are a comfort to him?

Paul not only did not cease in his giving thanks for them but he also continued "making mention of you in my prayers." He not only prayed for them when he was with them, but also when he was absent from them, and this would be to them a constant comfort and incentive to abide in his teachings.

We ought to remember others in our prayers and thereby help to guard and guide them in the Christian life.

2. Prayer unto the Father

In the main selection in the lesson from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians we are given one of his prayers which reaches a lofty height of worship and is rich in substance and beautiful in expression.

Prayer is akin to poetry in that it takes to the wings of imagination and ecstasy, it drops logic and soars off on buoyant words of life and light.

The prayer can be analyzed into some of the fundamental elements of this form of worship. Paul bowed his knees "unto the Father."

This is the first condition of prayer: a Father to whom we can pray.

It is impossible to pray in any proper sense to an Unknowable being or impersonal force and fate, for then we are not speaking to anybody

and are only going through a hollow mockery of form. When men lose their sense of the personality and Fatherhood of God, they have no God they can pray to and then they take to offering a "meditation" or soliloquy before the congregation; but even such a meaningless make-believe cannot long be kept up with a straight face.

"Father," however, fits our childhood as the light the eye and the air the lungs.

To him we go in the instinctive faith and fellowship of a child in its mother and father and pour out our thoughts and needs and aspirations to him. Any difficulties raised against converse and communion with God on grounds of scientific law or human molding of God's image in our likeness are obstructions slight as spider threads in the way of the intuitions and instincts of our hearts.

It is the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named to whom we pray." The meaning is that God's fatherhood is the pattern and source of all finite fatherhoods and families in heaven and on earth.

Fatherhood in us is a finite image of the infinite Fatherhood in the bosom of God.

Every dewdrop images the sun, every ray of light shoots from its central splendor, and so all human fatherhoods reproduce on a finite scale the infinite reality of God's own fatherly nature.

This plants prayer deep in the very nature of God and in our nature and thus puts it beyond all danger of its being rooted up by any passing thought or theory of science and philosophy.

We do well to trust these deep foundations of our nature and of God's nature and continue to "bow our knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."

3. Strengthened in the Inward Man

What is Paul's first petition for his Ephesian friends? What we pray for when praying for others is an indication of what we think they most need. Paul does not pray for any material goods or outward betterment for these friends, but that they "may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man."

The inward man,—that is the seat and source of strength.

Nothing can come out of a man that is not first in him. Shakespeare must have a stage in his brain on which all his characters play their parts and speak their wondrous language before he can put his plays on the stage of the theater. The musician must hear this melody or grand symphony in the concert hall of his heart before he can put it on the score and send it singing through the world. The sculptor must see an angel in the gallery of his imagination before he can see it hidden in a block of marble and with his chisel set it free. All the colossal works of Leonardo da Vinci were first in him before they came out of him.

We must always get before we can give.

Too many writers are trying to write something before they get something to write, and too many speakers including some preachers are trying to say something before they get something to say. Outer impotence in execution is always a mark and a measure of inward emptiness and weakness.

The great men who have moved mountains and cut their way through history had tremendous inner resources which flowed and forced their way out through them and shaped the world.

Moses had the Ten Commandments written on his heart before he carved them on stone, and Paul was full of dynamic ideas and energy which he then let loose in history.

All power is in God and that is why he can swing the stars in their orbits and cause all things to work out his purposes.

Men who are weak outwardly are first weak inwardly. Many men fail because they attempt more than is in them to do; their inward resources do not match and command their outward ends and means.

To get power we must get into right connection with the source of power.

We get power in our factories and engines by hitching them to the sun. To get wisdom and power to do the work of life we must get right into relations with those who have wisdom and power.

To be strengthened in the inward man we must get "power through his Spirit," through faith and fellowship in and prayer and obedience to God, and then we shall be strong with some of his strength.

4. Filled Unto the Fullness of God

To get into right relations with God we must also be "rooted and grounded in love," for love is a means of receiving wisdom and strength from those we love; and when we "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" we may then be filled unto all the fullness of God.

This is the limit and climax of divine blessing.

Our little souls and lives are fractionally developed and partially filled because we have not yet fully tapped the divine fullness.

The problem of our human life at every point is to get more of God in us.

We are little inlets and the connection with the great Sea is not open so that it can flow into us. The problem of getting more power to drive our machines and do all our work is just to find out ways of utilizing the infinite reservoirs of God's omnipotence.

The reason we are weak in our bodies is that they are not tuned so that the health and vitality of God can flow through us. Our minds are so narrow in their horizon and meager in their knowledge because we do not let the truth of God into them.

Especially are we spiritually empty and weak because we do not keep the arteries of faith connected up with the heart of God so that he can send his life coursing through our souls. Our cups are only partially filled, not because there is not water enough to fill them brimming full, but because we do not dip and submerge them in the ocean.

If we will but immerse our souls in God, in his truth and grace and love, in his service and sacrifice, his life will flow into us in gracious plentitude and we shall "be filled unto all the fullness of God."

5. Glory unto God in the Church and in Christ

Paul's prayer now rises into a climax of praise. He ascribes "unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

This affects us somewhat like a grand strain of music that is more than we can understand and touches the mystic chords of

the heart, like the sight of a flower or a sunset or a mountain view that moves us with feeling that "is too deep for tears."

We read it and let it play upon us and put its spell upon our souls, and we know that here is something with which all the wealth and power and splendor of the world and all the achievements of science and philosophy, cannot be compared. Skepticism becomes dumb and pitiful in the presence of such an anthem of praise. Irreligion has nothing to say and is bankrupt, and a godless world becomes dust and ashes at the core while this prayer is ascending to the throne of grace.

Here Paul rises on the wings of his soul to heavenly heights. This prayer is a rose window in the cathedral of Christianity that is all glorious with celestial light and grace and beauty.

The world without such a window is a prison house of darkness and despair. The soul is dead that does not perceive its infinite beauty and mocks at it.

Let us ever offer this prayer and see that God is glorified in us and in our church through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Are there religions that have some other concept of God than that of Father?
2. What other characters in the Bible were notably marked by prayer?
3. How can we become aware of our inward weakness and strengthen it?
4. Why do some Christians have more of God in them than others?
5. What kind of people have most of the fullness of God?

LESSON IX—DECEMBER 2

Paul Before His Judges

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul on the Witness Stand.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul Defends His Life Work.

Golden Text: I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. Acts 26:19.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 25:1–6.

Lesson Passage: Acts 24–1–26:32.

Lesson Text: Acts 24:24–27; 26:19–29

24 But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.

26 He hoped withal that money would be given him of Paul: wherefore also he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds.

19 Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judæa, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance.

21 For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple, and assayed to kill me.

22 Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come;

23 How that the Christ must suffer, *and* how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.

24 And as he thus made his defence, Festus saith with a loud voice, Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning is turning thee mad.

25 But Paul saith, I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28 And Agrippa *said* unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian.

29 And Paul *said*, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Paul before Felix and Drusilla.

2. A Vain Excuse.

3. Paul before Festus and Agrippa.
4. An Interruption.
5. Paul's Appeal to Agrippa.

Paul, having been rescued from the mob in the Temple area by the captain of the garrison, was now a prisoner in the hands of the Roman officer, who sent him down to Cæsarea to Felix, the Roman governor of the province. Felix gave Paul a preliminary hearing and then postponed the case until Lysias, the chief of police in Jerusalem, could come down.

1. Paul before Felix and Drusilla

The prisoner was committed to the keeping of a centurion and probably quickly passed from the governor's mind. One day this wearied, satiated man bethought himself of the strange Jew that had some new notion on the subject of religion, and it occurred to him that it might while away an idle hour to call him and hear him speak.

Into a luxurious room in the palace Paul was ushered in before Felix and Drusilla his wife.

It was a curious situation.

Felix was judge and master of Paul's life; with a word or a nod he could have sent him to his doom. Yet the prisoner was to preach to the judge. How strong was the temptation to curry favor with the judge and slip in a word for himself! How many a man would have bent the supple hinges of the knee and have fallen!

But never was Paul more fearless, brave and calm and truer to his real Master, Jesus Christ.

Two souls were a great audience to Paul and he preached to them one of his greatest sermons.

The sermon is not recorded, but its three divisions are given, righteousness, self-control and judgment. He uttered not a word concerning himself, made no slightest allusion to his own case, wasted no time in a long introduction or in theological incomprehensibilities, but came right to the point and preached straight to the conscience of the man before him. He spoke of righteousness to this corrupt man, of self-control to this sensual man, and of judgment to this godless man.

Paul reasoned of these things: he did not rant and rave, his argument was not perfervid froth and foam, but it was framed of solid facts and bound together with iron logic.

It was a tremendous sermon, and such preaching will be heard from.

2. A Vain Excuse

It was quickly heard from in this instance.

The Roman governor met with an unexpected experience and had the surprise of his life.

He had probably sent for Paul with no other thought than to be amused by him, but under his preaching the sleeping conscience of the Roman was aroused, his wicked life rose up behind him, judgment loomed up before him, and the man was terrified. The little Jew was too much for him, and the position of the two men was reversed and the judge became the real prisoner, and the prisoner was the real judge.

Felix trembled and he ought to have trembled, and so ought every sinner to tremble under the thoughts of righteousness, self-control and judgment to come.

Yet it was a good sign in Felix that he did tremble.

Moral feeling in him was not dead. He still had spiritual sensibility, and there was hope for him. Preaching that drives conviction down into the conscience and makes the soul tremble under a sense of its guilt is good preaching, and the Holy Spirit will bless it.

What was the outcome of this feeling, the action of this troubled listener? "Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me."

No action was taken. The outcome was delay that led to nothing.

The tide of feeling was not taken at its flood and did not lead on to life. Felix went back to his old ways and was none the better because he trembled under Paul's preaching. Religious feeling in itself does not save.

Conviction is not conversion.

People may be deeply and terribly exercised in certain circumstances, on beds of sickness or in times of peril or revival, and afterwards be as worldly and wicked as ever.

Yet Felix did not meet Paul's reasoning with flat rejection, but cast about for an excuse and found it in the word " convenient."

This is a plausible word; it sounds well.

It negatives the idea of fatal delay and final refusal and implies determination to act when the right time comes. It has a peculiarly quieting effect on the conscience. It seems to settle the great question right and leaves open only the unimportant matter of the time. It is almost equivalent to faith and salvation. With this word on his lips one is almost as good as saved.

It is an ingenious word—of the devil. Many a soul has trusted in this vain excuse and been lost. " Now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

3. Paul before Festus and Agrippa

After two years, during which Paul lay in prison in Cæsarea, Felix passed out of office as governor of Judea, and Festus came into his place. Herod Agrippa, king of a petty kingdom lying northeast of Galilee, with Bernice his wife, who was also his sister, happened to be visiting Festus in Cæsarea. The new governor mentioned to his guests the case of the Jewish prisoner left on his hands, and Agrippa, being a Jew, expressed a desire to hear the man himself.

The next day the hearing took place, Festus introduced Paul with a brief statement of his case, and Paul, assuming his usual dramatic attitude with uplifted hand, delivered his defense in which he went over the chief points of his life.

The lesson begins at the point where Paul is narrating the oft-repeated and never-to-be-forgotten story of his conversion. The experience of that hour burned these facts into Paul's mind and left their sharp impress forever; and they remain to this day as an inexpungable historical evidence of Christianity.

On that memorable day, in that blinding light out of a clear Syrian sky Jesus appeared unto Paul as a heavenly vision.

There are heavenly visions burning above us to coax and woo us into better things.

Any higher idea, ideal, impulse, conviction of duty, is for us a heavenly vision.

But the most splendid vision shining down upon this world is Jesus Christ, the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person: he that hath seen him hath seen the Father.

Paul was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: he might have been but he was not. That was always the grand thing about Paul: he turned vision into verity and victory and kept his conduct up abreast of his conscience. With him knowledge and action, faith and obedience blended into one life.

This is the point at which we most seriously and guiltily fail. We have visions enough, but we do not obey them.

We let the earthly life fall far away from the heavenly ideal, our conduct follows our conscience afar off, and thus the vision is disobeyed, perhaps until it fades out of our sky into the common day.

4. An Interruption

At a critical point in his speech, Paul was interrupted. Festus could not stand such talk and loudly and coarsely broke in upon the speaker with the exclamation, "Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning is turning thee mad." The Roman governor could not believe the narrative of events so far removed from his own experience and thought it could only be the hallucination of an insane mind.

Paul was evidently crazy.

Many mystical writings had muddled his head, and the governor made free to tell him so.

We live in different worlds and often seem insane to one another because we are at different levels of knowledge and experience.

The wise man often seems a fool to the witless man.

Columbus, dreaming and talking about crossing the Atlantic on a shorter line to China, was believed by many of his contemporaries to be literally insane. The astronomer peering through his tubes and pouring over mysterious figures, or the philosopher living in a cloudland of speculation, may seem to the horny-handed working man or hard-headed business man to be a visionary dreamer or queer crank.

We have little power of penetrating to higher levels and often make sorry work of understanding those above us.

The Roman governor could not understand the Christian preacher because he was so far below him. His worldly mind and hardened heart could not perceive the fine fabric of a heavenly vision.

Religion is peculiarly subject to being misunderstood as an empty dream and hallucination.

The coarse worldly man often considers it a craze or freak of the human mind, harmless enough for those that like that sort of thing, but a delusion with which a sensible practical man will have nothing to do.

Paul, however, was not thrown off his balance by this ill-mannered interruption and charge of the governor, but courteously answered, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness." His fine tough temper could stand the strain of the interruption and his wit was quick to furnish a neat and apt reply.

Paul was the man of true sanity and sobriety of mind, and Festus himself was the subject of delusion.

Sin is insanity, and holiness is health.

To believe in God and in Christ and live a life of faith and faithfulness is sanity and good sense, and in preaching and teaching this faith we verily "speak forth words of truth and soberness."

5. Paul's Appeal to Agrippa

Paul was more concerned with the Jewish king than with the Roman governor, and he now turned from Festus to Agrippa. He delicately complimented the Jew for knowing these things, "for," he said, "this hath not been done in a corner."

The roots of Christianity are not hidden in tradition and myth but they are historical and lie exposed on the rocky ledges of Judea.

Paul addressed Agrippa personally: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

Agrippa felt the application of Paul's logic was getting him into close quarters and he was in no mood to be caught in its coils.

So with jesting flippancy he answered, "With but a little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." In effect he said, "I am not such an easy case for conversion as you think."

The preacher, however, would not permit the king to put the whole matter off with a laugh and turned the jest back upon the king and the whole company in a solemn and noble prayer to God that must have penetrated as an arrow of conviction to some hearts and given a sober air to all their thoughts. Paul wished to God that the king and all who heard him might become as he was with one thrilling exception.

As he uttered his prayer he lifted his hand, and as the chain clanked, he uttered the striking words, "except these bonds." The scene was intensely dramatic and pathetic and must have touched even Romans to tears.

Paul meant what he said and his spirit of transparent sincerity affected all hearts.

The king was in no mood for further jesting and now rose to retire, followed by the rest of the company.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are good points in the introduction to a sermon or any speech?
2. Why do men plead excuses for not entering the Christian life?
3. What are some of the chief visions of life? How can we tell what is a heavenly vision?
4. Name some other great men that were considered foolish or crazy.
5. How can we distinguish between mental hallucination and spiritual sanity?

LESSON X—DECEMBER 9

Paul Goes to Rome

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul Makes the Most of His Circumstances.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Divine Leadership in Paul's Life.

Golden Text: I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Romans 1–16.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 91:9–16.

Lesson Passage: Acts 27:1–28:31; Rom. 1:8–15; Phil. 1:12–14.

Lesson Text: Acts 28:11–24, 30–31

11 And after three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the island, whose sign was The Twin Brothers.

12 And touching at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

13 And from thence we made a circuit, and arrived at Rhegium: and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli;

14 Where we found brethren, and were entreated to tarry with them seven days: and so we came to Rome.

15 And from thence the brethren, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the chief of the Jews: and when they were come together, he said unto them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans:

18 Who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation.

20 For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with *me:* for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judæa concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded *the matter,* testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

30 And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Paul Explains His Position.*
2. *A Sect Everywhere Spoken Against.*
3. *An All-Day Sermon.*
4. *Lost Spiritual Sensibility.*
5. *Paul Turns to the Gentiles.*

Paul had long felt the attraction of Rome and at last had arrived. The metropolis of the world with its two million inhabitants sat on its seven hills and bore the proud name of the Eternal City.

All roads ran to its center, all power radiated from its throne, and around its hub revolved the mighty rim of the world.

From its marble Forum stretched in every direction miles of public buildings, fashionable streets and costly palaces, splendid avenues, triumphal arches, magnificent aqueducts, intermingled with slums of poverty and vice. All the world had been taxed to enrich this city. Art and learning were already stealing away from Athens and making Rome the university city of the world. Every ambitious face was set towards this imperial seat and center.

Paul had at length arrived, not as he had supposed he would, but bound in chains as a prisoner.

He was living in his own house, but a soldier was always at his side and with every movement of his hand his chain clanked.

Yet he was incomparably the greatest man in that city beside whom Nero shrinks into insignificance.

His bonds could not bind the truth, but fell out "rather unto the progress of the gospel."

Here he preached to Jews and Gentiles and sent the gospel message up into the very palace of Cæsar and wrote letters that are to-day circulating in the spiritual life-blood of the world.

1. Paul Explains His Position

After three days in which we may suppose he was resting and arranging his affairs, Paul was ready for work.

The prisoner was bound, but the preacher was free.

The Word of God cannot be bound anywhere, and whatever our condition we can always speak and live the gospel.

Paul began as usual with the Jews. When they were assembled he first made a brief statement of his case. In every such statement Paul always stood on and started from conservative ground, and so be put in the forefront the fact that he "had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers." He addressed them as brethren and spoke to them as a loyal Jew and thus set himself in a favorable light.

Yet notwithstanding this fact, he had been delivered a prisoner to the Romans, who, when they had examined him, found no cause of death in him and would have released him had not the Jews objected and thus forced him to appeal to Cæsar.

The appeal to Cæsar, however, bore a suspicious look to Jews, implying treachery to his own country, and Paul was careful to explain that he had no charge against his nation.

For this reason he had entreated them to see and hear him; and he concluded with the declaration, "because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." The "hope of Israel" was the hope of the Messiah, culminating in the hope of the resurrection of the dead.

It was this loyalty to his ancestral faith that had brought Paul bound from Jerusalem to Rome.

The faith that freed his heart fettered his hands and this strange contradiction is sometimes wrought in our lives.

2. A Sect Everywhere Spoken Against

The Jews answered that they had received no letters or reports against him, but that they desired to hear him, saying: "for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against."

It was a "sect" of the Jews, which was bad enough; Christians were declared to be "the enemies of mankind," and they were charged with worshiping a crucified ass and drinking the blood of slaughtered infants at their religious feast.

Rome rang with these rumors, and three years later when Nero, to shield himself, charged them with having set fire to the city, the infuriated populace saw Christians thrown to wild beasts in the arena

and burned as torches in Nero's gardens with shouts of frenzied delight. "Everywhere spoken against" was thus the report that met Paul.

But has any great name or movement ever escaped this fate?

Was not Christ himself spoken against from the opening hour of his ministry down to his last expiring cry on the cross? and shall the disciple be above the Master?

Call the roll of the great prophets and apostles in all ages, Moses and Isaiah, Socrates and Seneca, Luther and Lincoln, and have they not almost without exception been spoken against? Every prophet runs the risk of being stoned by his own generation; it is not until the next generation that his tomb is built and enriched with costly decorations.

And can present reform and forward movement in church or state, religion or politics, hope for any better reception?

Truth must always fight its way through opposition and obloquy to triumph.

Even science cannot tell the world a new truth without being spoken against, and its prophets have at times written their discoveries with their blood.

The very best things in the world have at first been branded with the worst names. It is almost a sign of truth and righteousness and a certificate of good character to be spoken against by this world.

Conventional respectability and popularity are not signs and accompaniments of world-shaking names and movements; these are rather things to be feared and despised by the prophet and reformer who wants to roll the world out of its self-satisfied stagnation and sin and push it forward into light.

3. An All-Day Sermon

A day was now set apart for a more extended hearing of Paul, and at the appointed time the Jews were present in his house in a great number. Paul preached to them an all-day sermon, for at times he was unconscionably long in his preaching and once preached a young man to sleep so that he fell out of the window on which he was sitting.

Paul endeavored to persuade the Jews "concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets." Again he takes the Jews on their own ground and proves the Messiahship of Christ out of their own Scriptures.

He would have them know that the new gospel is simply their old faith blossoming out into its perfect flower and ripening into its finest fruit.

Paul thus removed Christianity out of the category of new notions that are antagonistic to the old faith and set it forth as the old faith in a new and more perfect form.

Christ does not destroy Moses any more than the fruit destroys the root, but Christ fulfills Moses as the flower fulfills the seed.

"And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved."

It is an honest record and an honest book that writes down such a fact on its page.

Luke did not compliment Paul as a preacher by making it out that all his hearers believed him, but while claiming a partial success he boldly acknowledged partial defeat.

That some believe and some disbelieve is one of the deepest lines of division among men.

When a presidential campaign splits the country and five or six millions vote on one side and five or six millions on the other side, what divides them? Just this, that some believe and some disbelieve the things which are spoken.

The widest chasm among men is the moral difference in their character and conduct, and at bottom of this lies a difference of practical belief: some believe the things that are spoken concerning God and righteousness and Christ and salvation and some disbelieve.

But we are accountable for our beliefs and by them shall we be judged.

4. Lost Spiritual Sensibility

Thus the Jews were a divided audience, as is every congregation, but before they parted Paul had one final word. It was only one word he had to say, but it was a word of tremendous significance. This word also Paul quoted from one of their own prophets, so that out of their

own Scriptures he hurled upon them this fiery bolt of condemnation.

The quotation is couched in the startling language of prophecy, but its point is plain. "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see and shall in no wise perceive."

These people had all the faculties of sight and hearing, thought and will, conscience and responsibility, but through disuse and disobedience they had dulled and indurated these so that they would no longer perceive and receive truth and righteousness. The subjects of special revelation, as the chosen people were, had become hardened against it. The children of the day had become blinded children of the night. The light that was in them had turned to darkness, and then how great was that darkness!

This possibility is one of the fatal dangers of life.

Every faculty, physical and spiritual, through disuse or abuse, loses its sensitivity and power. The eye that can catch the mighty pulsations of the sun and mirror the glories of the earth and sky, by persistently closing its lid, can forget the sun, lose its cunning and lapse into endless night.

Conscience is subject to the same deterioration and death. We cannot disbelieve truth and turn from Jesus Christ and be as good as ever; already some light has faded out from our eyes, some spiritual sensitiveness is lost. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

5. Paul Turns to the Gentiles

Paul now parted with these Jewish unbelievers with the solemn declaration, "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear."

The Jews were given the first chance, but they could not thwart the grace of God by rejecting it, and what they refused others should receive, and despised Gentiles should pass into the kingdom of God before them. We may shut our own eyes, but the sun will shine for other eyes and the beauty and glory of the world shall not be hid.

We may exclude ourselves from the kingdom of the redeemed, but the grace of God will be admitted into other hearts and the Saviour of the world shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

The Book of Acts closes with a characteristic picture of Paul at work. Two years he dwelt in his own hired house, " and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him."

This record is true of Paul in every word and sums up his life from the hour when he fell under the splendor of Christ's presence and power near Damascus to the hour when he fell under the executioner's sword at Rome.

Luke closes his record at this point very probably because he wrote his book at this period in Paul's life when he knew no more because no more had yet happened. This is strong evidence that Luke wrote the Acts before Paul's death, which probably occurred in the great Neronian persecution in 64 A. D., and as he wrote his Gospel before he wrote the Acts, this carries the date of the Gospel by Luke still closer to the time of the death of Christ.

Tradition releases Paul from this first imprisonment for further missionary work and brings him back a few years later for a final imprisonment and death. During this first imprisonment he wrote the Epistles to the Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and to Philemon, and in the interval between the first and second imprisonments it is supposed he wrote I Timothy and Titus, in his final imprisonment writing II Timothy, which is the last writing we have from his hand.

His work is now done, and the greatest leader we have seen since Moses passes from our view. But hardly of any other human being is it so grandly true that he " being dead yet speaketh."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How did Rome come to be such a great city?
2. Why does the gospel always seek to plant itself in large cities?
3. Is the Old Testament still of value in preaching the gospel?
4. Why is it that some believe and some disbelieve the gospel?
5. Is the loss of spiritual sensibility a just penalty for disobedience?

LESSON XI—DECEMBER 16

Paul and His Friends

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul as a Friend.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Place of Friendship in the Christian Life.

Golden Text: A friend loveth at all times. Proverbs 17:17.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 63:1–7.

Lesson Passage: Acts 20:36–38; Rom. 16:1–4; Philemon.

Lesson Text: Philemon 1:8–21

8 Wherefore, though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting,

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner also of Christ Jesus:

10 I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus,

11 Who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me:

12 Whom I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart:

13 Whom I would fain have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will.

15 For perhaps he was therefore parted *from thee* for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever;

16 No longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself.

18 But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth *thee* aught, put that to mine account;

19 I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides.

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my heart in Christ.

21 Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Onesimus the Slave.

2. The Slave Returned to His Owner.

3. No Longer a Slave.

4. Philemon's Indebtedness to Paul.

5. A Hint at Manumission.

This letter is the gem among Paul's Epistles and is one of the most beautiful and as well as one of the most profoundly significant things in the Bible.

Onesimus was a slave who had probably robbed and then run away from his master, Philemon, in Colosse, and turned up in Rome, the whirlpool towards which all the flotsam and jetsam of the world then drifted.

Here Paul found him and converted him and became dearly attached to him.

Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon carrying with him this little letter in which he graciously and tactfully negotiated the ticklish business of restoring the slave to his master, but under new conditions in which the old relation of ownership was transformed and transfigured into Christian brotherhood.

1. Onesimus the Slave

The Bible sets all sorts and conditions of men in its gallery of portraits and we have had passed before us in our lessons kings and prophets, statesmen and soldiers, princes and peasants, preachers and missionaries, but here is a lesson devoted to a slave. Even our Revised Version continues to soften and fails to give the full force of the original by translating it "servant," whereas its real meaning is "slave" and this should be permitted to fall upon us in all its raw and harsh sound and significance.

Onesimus was owned by Philemon, a citizen of Colosse near Ephesus, who had been converted under the ministry of Paul, probably while he was laboring in that city.

This slave, having fallen under the influence of Paul, became something more than an ordinary convert and evidently had an attractive personality and noble qualities, for Paul fell in love with him and repeatedly uses endearing terms in referring to him. The apostle speaks of the slave as "my child" and "my very heart" and manifests the warmest and most tender personal attachment to him.

Two more widely contrasted persons than Paul and Onesimus could hardly be imagined: the one an eminent man in intellectual genius who was just closing a great career, and the other a robber and escaped slave who belonged to a low and degraded class. Yet the apostle is entirely unconscious of any such differences and knows Onesimus only as a Christian brother and dear friend.

It was the gospel of Christ that had bridged this wide and ordinarily impassable chasm and brought these two men together and made them one in Christ.

From the top of intellectual attainment and power Paul reached down to the bottom of society and out of its dregs lifted up this fugitive slave.

It is a striking illustration of the power of the gospel to obliterate all superficial distinctions and bind men of all classes into one brotherhood.

Paul practiced what he preached: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). The gospel still has this spirit and power of dissolving external distinctions of birth and breed and social conditions and making us of one mind and spirit in Christ.

This was the social gospel as preached and practiced by Paul which is still operating as a fundamental need of our world.

This is the true basis of friendship which unites us in Christian brotherhood and spirit. Outward differences may then remain and will remain, but they are lost in the deeper unity of mind and heart in Christ.

2. The Slave Returned to His Owner

The problem now arose, What was to be done with the convert who was still the legal slave of Philemon?

Shall Paul continue to give refuge to Onesimus on the ground that Philemon had no right to him; and shall Onesimus refuse to go back to his owner?

There was no hesitation on this point either on the part of Paul or of Onesimus. Paul sent the slave back to his master, probably carrying this little letter with him, and thus recognized the hard legal fact of the situation.

Paul would have liked to have kept Onesimus as a personal attendant "that he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel." But he would take no such advantage of his friend Philemon as to keep the slave without the friend's knowledge and permission: "but without

thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will."

Paul might very well have assumed that Philemon would be willing that he should retain Onesimus, but he would act on no such assumption and returned Onesimus to his owner.

This illustrates the perfect candor that should obtain among friends.

Paul did not venture to interpret Philemon's rights for him, but allowed him to decide the point for himself. Friendship is careful of mutual rights and obligations and does not presume to take an advantage on this ground.

There are some rights that even friendship must not intrude upon, some points it should not pass.

Every one has around him a certain limit or barrier of privacy and self-respect which the nearest friend should not rudely break through.

Even when desiring favors of a friend we should not put him in a position in which we are forcing him to accede to our desires, but should leave him the liberty of expressing his friendship and love in his own way.

3. No Longer a Slave

Paul returned Onesimus as a slave to his master Philemon, and yet no longer as a slave. This letter was enveloped in such an atmosphere and breathed such a spirit as put master and slave in a very different relation.

They were now both Christians, slaves of the Lord Jesus who was now their common Master.

Paul plays upon this point and gently but firmly presses it home. He tells Philemon that " perhaps " he lost his slave that he might get him back in an endless relation, " that thou shouldest have him for ever; no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord."

A new bond now held these two men together that in its very nature dissolved the old bond.

The old bondage was a hard and harsh relation in which the slave scarcely had any rights the master was bound to respect. Roman slavery was arbitrary and cruel beyond anything we have known in our modern world. A Roman master once crucified two thousand slaves and strung their crosses out along the Appian way.

Such a relation became impossible between Christian brothers redeemed by Christ and fashioned into his image.

Paul trusted Philemon to receive and treat Onesimus in this new relation and work out its proper consequences.

How much depends in all our social relations and problems on the spirit in which we regard and deal with one another?

Friendship is impossible on any basis of an arbitrary assumption of superior right and a haughty demeanor on one or the other side, and it can only live in a genial atmosphere of mutual respect and love.

The same spirit will go far towards solving social problems arising out of the relations of capital and labor and of employers and employees.

If this relation is conducted on the basis of hard legal rights, then one side will exact as much and the other will give as little as possible in a spirit of grudging unwillingness and resentment that will breed hatred and violence and work irreparable injury to both sides.

But if the relation is conducted in an atmosphere of brotherhood with a keen sense on both sides of justice and generosity, each sincerely desiring to do the best for the other, the relation will work smoothly and profitably all around.

A great need of our modern world is to eliminate any surviving relic not only of the form but of the spirit of slavery from our social order and to immerse it and transform it in an atmosphere of Christian brotherhood and love.

4. Philemon's Indebtedness to Paul

Paul now puts forward another plea with Philemon. The favor in this friendship was not all on one side.

Paul is asking something of Philemon, but does not Philemon owe something to Paul?

Who led Philemon out of the slavery of the mind and heart into the liberty of Christ?

Paul will gladly make good any loss Philemon has sustained at the hands of Onesimus, and he will do this without saying unto him "that thou owest to me even thine own self besides." He will not say it, but he will allude to it in unmistakable terms.

Philemon's debt to Paul was incomparably greater than any debt Paul could owe to Philemon because of this runaway slave.

It is always so in friendship: its obligations are mutual, its gains are on both sides, but they may be of different kinds.

One friend may derive one kind of gain from another and receive another kind of far greater value. While Philemon is granting a favor to Paul, let him not forget what Paul has done for him. We owe all our friends more than we ever can repay them on any commercial basis.

Especially do we owe any one who has led us into larger light and liberty in the Christian life and in the fields of truth and service a debt that cannot be measured in terms of material benefits. On this principle we owe Christ an infinite debt and should devote all that we have and are to him.

5. A Hint at Manumission

Paul now ventures on delicate ground and hints at something he does not care to mention in express words. "Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say."

Often can we trust our friends to do better than we ask and it is an honor to a friend thus to trust his larger and better self.

But why did Paul not demand the emancipation of this slave from his master? Because the time for this had not yet come.

Nowhere does the Bible do this, a fact that embarrassed the abolitionists in our former history.

Slavery in the ancient world was so deeply rooted in law and custom and social ideas that it could not be suddenly eradicated by violent means. Only time could work such changes in the mental and moral climate of the world that this old evil could be abolished.

But Paul did breathe a spirit through this letter into this relation which in time was a silent but powerful influence in abolishing it.

In fact this little letter put a charge of dynamite under the institution of slavery which did help to blow it out of the world; or it diffused through the atmosphere of civilization a spirit of humanity and brotherhood which in the course of the Christian centuries dissolved the fetters of slavery as the balmy breath of the spring melts the icy bonds of winter.

Verily the hand of Paul in penning this brief letter reached through the ages and helped to write, along with the hand of Abraham Lincoln, the American Emancipation Proclamation.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is friendship?
2. What place does friendship have in the Christian life?
3. What are some of the dangers that beset friendship?
4. What are some safeguards against straining and severing our friendships?
5. What points in true friendship does Paul illustrate in this letter?

LESSON XII—DECEMBER 23

Paul's Last Message

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Christian's Goal.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul's Victorious Faith.

Golden Text: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. II Tim. 4:7.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 98.

Lesson Passage: II Timothy 4:1–18.

Lesson Text: II Timothy 4:1–8, 16–18

1 I charge *thee* in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

2 Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts;

4 And will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.

5 But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry.

6 For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.

16 At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account.

17 But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Solemn Charge.

2. Impending Defection.

3. Already Being Offered.

4. A Crown of Righteousness.

5. Final Words.

The Second Epistle to Timothy is the last writing we have from the hand of Paul. It was written in Rome near the end of his second im-

prisonment, a short time before his execution under Nero, to Timothy in Ephesus.

This second imprisonment of the Christian apostle was much harsher than the first and was probably passed in the terrible Mamertine prison.

Paul was now an old man, broken in health, suffering from the damp and cold (4:13), deserted of friends except the faithful Luke, and piteously begs Timothy to bring Mark and come to him. Yet the letter written in these distressful circumstances breathes an air of unflinching faith and courage.

We here see the battle-scarred veteran penning his last pathetic words and reaching forth his trembling hand to receive his crown.

1. A Solemn Charge

The aged apostle gives a solemn charge to the young evangelist.

This charge is projected on the background of mighty realities and motives.

Christianity never gives short-sighted views and trivial reasons, but frames its motives in infinities and eternities.

Paul admonishes Timothy "in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom." These great verities slope up from us and are soon lost to our little vision in the mysteries of the infinite and eternal, and yet they are near us, even in our hearts. The universal elements of the world, such as air and light, soon transcend our understanding, and yet they suffuse our whole being and by them we live.

The presence of God and Christ and the kingdom should envelop us as an atmosphere and penetrate to the core of our hearts, keeping us alive and alert to these spiritual realities and putting divine pressure upon us in all our ways.

Overshadowed by these eternal verities, Timothy was to "preach the word." "The word" was not the gospels of the New Testament, which were not yet in existence, but the gospel or truth concerning Christ who is himself the supreme Word of God.

The business of the minister and teacher is to present truth so that it will lay hold of the mind and conscience and move the will. All legitimate means are to be used to illuminate and enforce the truth, to give it point and pungency, freshness and force.

What gospel truth often needs in our preaching and teaching is a new cutting edge.

Timothy was to " be urgent in season, out of season ": he was not only to preach at regular services on stated occasions, but was to embrace every opportunity of imparting the gospel; and these wayside, incidental and often apparently accidental ministries are frequently unexpectedly fruitful in results.

The Christian's ministry must not degenerate into mere professionalism, but should be a constant service and his very life should be a living sermon.

In his preaching the young minister was to " reprove, rebuke, exhort "; his preaching was not to be one monotonous strain, a continuous web from which every sermon was cut off with the same pattern and colors, but was to be varied and adapted to different classes and occasions.

The minister cannot always speak smooth words, but sometimes must use sharp speech and strike sin hard.

Yet this must never be done in a harsh high-tempered spirit, but always with long suffering and patient teaching.

2. Impending Defection

The young evangelist was next warned against impending defection and degeneracy. The time was near when professing Christians would not endure healthful doctrine, but would have itching ears and heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts.

Paul knew human nature well enough to know that it would not stand the truth, already he discerned signs of restlessness, and his prophetic eye saw what was coming.

All this came to pass in the swarm of heresies that swept over the early church. Heathen error, having failed to conquer Christianity, tried to amalgamate itself with it and the result was a numerous brood of hybrid cults.

This process is still working in the universal fermentation of the world.

The truth often stings the ears and pricks the consciences and is a very uncomfortable companion in the life. People that do not want to conform themselves to the truth naturally want to conform the truth to themselves, and the quickest way of changing the teaching is to change the teacher.

There are in almost every congregation itching ears that want to be tickled rather than taught.

Human nature is not naturally friendly to spiritual truth and desires preaching that will not prick its sin, but please its lust. And it can generally get what it wants. There are always teachers that will accommodate their teaching to the times and shape the supply to meet the demand.

It is folly for us to try to find the truth by following our lusts, or to escape truthful teaching by rejecting the teacher.

Those that " turn away their ears from the truth," " turn aside unto fables." This was abundantly illustrated in the early church when nothing was too absurd to be believed and the most fantastic fables were accepted in place of sober truth.

Nothing is so credulous as incredulity.

The sceptic that loftily disclaims faith is often found to be believing in some uncanny mystery that easily puts Christian faith to the blush. People that reject miracles as incredible often believe in spirit-rappings and ghosts galore.

The human mind abhors skepticism and agnosticism as nature abhors a vacuum.

Faith is its natural food, and when it rejects truth it soon turns aside unto fables.

This defection and degeneracy was not to discourage Timothy, but was only to increase his watchfulness and gird him up for endu ance that he might do the work of an evangelist.

The prevalence of error must not relax our preaching of the truth, and we must continue to teach and live the gospel whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

3. Already Being Offered

The aged apostle now lays additional and heavy responsibility on his younger associate by virtually passing over to him the mantle of his ministry, and his words suddenly become charged with lofty and solemn eloquence as he writes of his approaching departure. "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come."

His very life was being poured out in that damp dungeon as an offering for his faith.

He knew the end was near and that others must carry on the work. Yet how calmly and triumphantly he writes.

Death was not darkness to him, but only departure; departure out of the foul dungeon into the glory-lighted city that is crowded with the beatific splendor of God.

The flash of the sword that would sever his head from his body would be to him the first gleam of that glory streaming through the gates ajar.

This calm and courageous faith that inspired him was no sudden impulse or acquisition, but was rooted in a life of faithfulness; his victory was the last stroke and shout of a long battle. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

Paul had kept his faith, yet it was a larger and richer faith at the end of his career than at its beginning.

He had not kept his faith as a finished and final thing that could not change, not as a jewel that is kept in a box and can add no increase to its luster and beauty, but he had kept it as a root that grows and blooms into larger and lovelier life. We should keep our faith through discouragement and doubt, and yet we should not keep it shut in from all change and growth, but should let it expand and unfold into an ever richer and more fruitful faith and life.

With such a record behind him Paul could calmly face death before him, and faithful living is ever the surest preparation for triumphant dying.

4. A Crown of Righteousness

From his record Paul now turns to his reward: "henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day."

Righteousness is not the whole of its own reward: it has a splendid future in which it shall wear a crown.

The saint that is torn to pieces with the iron teeth of adverse circumstances, or is ground down under the oppressor's heel or the proud world's contumely, shall at last be lifted to a throne and shall rule.

The best people are entitled to the best places and in time shall get them.

Yet this reward is "the crown of righteousness." It is not a material crown of jeweled gold, but a spiritual crown wrought on the soul itself.

The spirits of just men made perfect are themselves crowns.

This internal crown of righteousness is the highest reward of faith and faithfulness, though it shall also be set on a throne amid the glories of the celestial city.

Paul, however, could not speak of his own reward without noting the equal reward of others. "And not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing."

Paul would have no exclusive selfish crown.

Why did William II of Germany, when he came to the throne, quickly retire Bismarck? Because that Prime Minister, blazing with distinction, obscured the brightness of the young emperor's crown. That inordinately vain youth (Alas for his pride, how he is now fallen!) could brook no competition with himself in the public gaze. He said in effect, "I will have this crown myself and no man shall dim its brightness or share a ray of its glory." And so the man of iron who had made Germany had to take himself off into obscurity and die of a broken heart.

Now note the language of Paul when he was about to receive a crown: "and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing."

How splendid are the words "not to me only"!

Paul would have no selfish crown and he would take nothing for himself that he could not let others have also. In crowning himself he did not discrown the humblest believer.

In the Christian life there are crowns for us all, for we are all priests and kings unto God.

In the Kingdom of heaven no one puts himself up by pushing others down, but in its broad expansiveness we all enter into the joy of our Lord.

5. Final Words

The concluding verses of this letter abound in interesting personal notes and human touches that bring the great apostle near to us. He wants Timothy to hasten to him and to bring Mark—that Mark whom he once refused to have with him and separated himself from, but now he wants close to his heart.

Paul knew how to correct a mistaken judgment.

He wants his cloak, for he is cold, and his books, for he had nothing to read and the scholar in him is still alive and wants to keep on widening his knowledge and experience.

He has had his first hearing before the Roman court and knew the pang of loneliness, sharper than a serpent's tooth, of deserting friends.

Yet the Lord stood with him and enabled him to preach the truth even at his trial. He is calmly confident that the Lord shall deliver him from every evil and save him unto the heavenly kingdom: "to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

A few more personal notes, a final benediction, and the letter ends.

Presently the hand which had written so many letters that had instructed and comforted so many minds and hearts and are yet blessing the world, lay still upon the blood-stained sand.

At the stroke of the executioner's sword there flashed upon his soul that crown of righteousness that shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Who was Timothy and how did he come to be associated with Paul?
2. What are some defections from Christian faith in our day?
3. May we win and wear the crown of righteousness now?
4. Is the heavenly kingdom also in this world?
5. Name the letters of Paul and state the purpose of each one.

LESSON XIII—DECEMBER 30

REVIEW

Paul, the World Christian

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Secret of Paul's Greatness.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Life and Achievements of Paul.

Golden Text: For me to live is Christ. Philippians 1:21.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 103:1–5, 8–13.

The lessons of the Quarter have taken us along the steps of the closing years of Paul's life, starting with him in Ephesus about the middle of his third missionary journey and following him around through Corinth and back to Jerusalem, where he was arrested and taken as a prisoner to Rome, the final scene of his life.

1. Paul in Ephesus

Ephesus was the principal city of Asia Minor and the seat of the worship of Diana, whose famous Temple was the crowning glory of the whole region.

Paul labored here three years, beginning in a synagogue and then passing out to the lecture room of Tyrannus.

His presence at first attracted little attention, but at length his teaching began to tell and converts multiplied. They showed their conversion by confessing their evil deeds and bringing their magical books and burning them in a heap.

There are many books in our own cities and they are not far to seek that should be burned.

Paul founded a church in Ephesus that became important and to it he wrote from Rome the Epistle to the Ephesians that is rich in instruction in the Christian life.

In the passage from it in the lesson he speaks of the different offices that had arisen in the church and points out that the object and of these offices is to produce good people, fullgrown men, that one vital Christian grace is speaking the truth in love.

2. Spiritual Gifts

While in Ephesus Paul, learning of some trouble in the church in Corinth, wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians in which he straightened things out and in the midst of it he inserted this beautiful little lyric or love song.

It is one of the finest bits of poetry in the Bible and holds a high place in the world's literature.

Paul has pointed out in the preceding chapter that there are diversities of gifts and among them there is " a most excellent way " which is set forth in the familiar Chapter XIII.

Love is brought into comparison and competition with other gifts and in every instance wins the prize.

Eloquence and knowledge and faith and charity and self-sacrifice all grow pale in its brightness. Love is shown to be the all-inclusive grace so that every other grace is a form or element of love as every color is a constituent of white light. Other graces also are temporary, means that will pass away as they reach their end, but love is an end in itself and is imperishable.

Love is shown to be the supreme grace, the superbest blossom of life and " the greatest thing in the world " and in all worlds.

3. Christian Stewardship

In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, written in Macedonia while on his way from Ephesus to Corinth, Paul gives instructions on the subject of money.

Money is religious and the Bible has much to say about it.

Paul had a good example of liberality in giving in the Macedonians who out of their sufferings and poverty had yet abounded in this grace.

They not only gave their money but also " gave their own selves to the Lord," an all-inclusive gift that we should all make.

Paul was careful to commend the Corinthians for other graces in which they were conspicuous before calling their attention to the virtues in which they were deficient.

The first duty of a critic is to see good points and appreciate and appraise them before finding fault.

Paul then tested the love of these Corinthians for him by their liberality and he appeals to the example of Christ as an incentive to them.

He tells them that God loves a cheerful giver, one who shouts with joy as he gives as the Hebrew priests blew their silver trumpets when the smoke of their sacrifice rose from the altar.

4. Paul's Last Journey to Jerusalem

Having visited his church at Corinth Paul started on his return to Jerusalem, stopping at Miletus, near Ephesus, where the Ephesian elders came to meet him.

He announced to them the dangers ahead, but nothing could dissuade him from this purpose to go forward.

In pathetic final words he reminded them of how he had taught them repentance towards God and faith toward the Lord Jesus and had been faithful in declaring to them the whole counsel of God.

He next urges these elders to take heed to themselves and to feed the church.

Still is it our work as pastors and teachers to feed people with faith and sympathy, the true bread of life.

Warning followed instruction, for where there are sheep there are wolves. Dangers arise without the church, but even more serious ones arise within, and therefore these elders were bidden to "watch."

Watching is an important part of life in every field, and every good person and cause has some enemy lurking near by.

Paul showed his interest in practical philanthropy and preserved for us a precious unrecorded saying from the lips of Jesus.

5. World's Temperance Lesson

Paul in his letters abounded in practical instructions bearing on moral dangers and duties, and a passage from his Epistle to the Romans is a good temperance lesson.

He enjoined subjection to the higher powers, even though he lived under a corrupt and tyrannical pagan government, for such obedience is a part of good citizenship which is a part of the Christian life.

He set forth love as the fulfilling of the law, for all true laws are forms of love, and all forms of love are forms of law.

He urged these Roman Christians to "walk becomingly," and surely this is a Christian duty and this walk will keep us away from intoxicating drink which sends a man staggering along in a very unbecoming way.

The grand cure for every form of sensual living is to put on the Lord Jesus, who renews the inner nature so that it will then bear only good fruits.

Through faith in and fellowship with Christ we may acquire his spirit and be fashioned into his likeness, and then we shall follow him and ever walk becomingly.

6. Peace and Good Will Among Men

This lesson fell on Armistice Day and was appropriate for that day so full of historic memories.

Paul begins the fundamentals of personality in the consecration of the body and mind to God.

War springs out of the lusts of the heart which are often deeply intertwined with the fleshly lusts of the body.

A still deeper root of the Christian spirit and life is love, the good will that pervades and controls all our life in our social relations.

Love must be diligent and zealous, or it becomes a weak sentimentalism.

It is fervent or boiling in spirit, and we need to have some warmth and fire in us that will at times heat us up to the boiling point.

The Christian spirit runs on into hope and patience that are essential to a strong and enduring life.

Setting not the mind on high things but condescending to things that are lowly is a fine Christian virtue that has insight into the relative values of things and is not misled by outward show.

All these Christian graces fuse into a state of good will among men and among nations that is a stronger insurance of world peace than any number of soldiers and warships.

7. Paul's Experience in Jerusalem

From his meeting with the Ephesian elders Paul passed on up to Jerusalem where the trouble he had predicted soon occurred.

He was seen in the Temple by some Jews who raised a cry against him and he was caught in a furious mob.

The Roman captain rescued him and on the stairway leading up into the castle he was permitted to deliver a speech to the crowd. Mention of the Gentiles renewed the outcry of the mob, and Paul was being bound that he might be beaten when he remarked to the Roman captain that he was a Roman.

The word acted like magic to release Paul from such treatment. The Roman captain said he had bought his citizenship with a great sum, but Paul could proudly say, "But I am Roman born."

We all are bought with a great price and yet we inherit liberty in Christ as a free gift. We should appreciate our citizenship in the kingdom of God.

8. The Prayers of Paul

What was the secret of Paul's wonderful life?

Look through his life and letters and it will be found in his spirit and habit of prayer.

All through them are scattered many brief prayers or allusions to prayer and it is plain that his roots went down through Christ into God.

The mountain has its base planted deep in the heart of the planet and hence it stands so solid and secure, and only a life rooted in the Rock of Ages and abiding in the secret place of the Most High can be steadfast and strong.

Paul prayed to the Father, and it is only to a Father that we could pray.

By prayer he was strengthened in the inward man, and this is the center where prayer lays hold of us and binds us to God and only as we are strong inwardly can we be strong outwardly.

Thus may we be filled "unto all the fullness of God" and then will our cup be brim full and running over.

9. Paul Before His Judges

From his arrest in Jerusalem Paul was taken down to Cæsarea to be placed on trial before the governor of the province. He appeared before Felix and Drusilla his wife and preached a sermon that made Felix tremble, but he pled an excuse for further time and never again heard the gospel message.

He was replaced by Festus and Paul made another speech before Festus and Agrippa in which he made a special appeal to Agrippa the Jew. But the Jew was not so easily persuaded as Paul had hoped he might be, and Paul closed with a noble appeal in which he wished that all that heard him might be as he was, except the chain on his uplifted hand.

The temptation may have been strong with Paul to put in a word for himself in these interviews, but he never alluded to his case and preached the gospel to these sinful men in high places with unrelaxed faithfulness and zeal.

10. Paul Goes to Rome

Through a memorable sea voyage and shipwreck Paul at last made his way to Rome and entered the Eternal City whither all roads then led.

He explained his situation to the Jews and there were some aspects of his case that they thought suspicious.

Already Christianity was a sect everywhere spoken against, and there are not wanting those who speak against it to-day.

Paul preached an all-day sermon to these Jews, but even such a long sermon partly failed of its purpose, as very long sermons usually do.

Paul then quoted a solemn passage of judgment against these unbelieving Jews, showing that with all their means of sight and hearing they yet did not see and hear because unbelief had indurated their spiritual sensibility.

All our powers must be properly used or they will wither and leave us impotent.

Paul now turned to the Gentiles, always his next step when the Jews had rejected his message.

The grace of God shall not be thwarted and when shut out of one mind it will find entrance into another.

11. Paul and His Friends

Paul had friends who were bound to his heart with cords stronger than links of steel and his life and letters illustrate the true principles of friendship.

This Epistle to Philemon is the little letter or mere note of one friend to another on a delicate point, but Paul manages it with perfect graciousness and tact.

The point was to get his friend to receive back a runaway slave of his whom Paul had picked up and converted in Rome, so that he would no longer be treated as a slave but as a Christian brother.

Paul pays fine compliments and gracious deference to his friend, whom he had also converted, and then suggests how he should receive the slave as a Christian brother and even ventures to suggest that his friend will do more than he asks, plainly hinting at manumission.

This letter put dynamite under the institution of slavery and helped to blow it out of the Christian world.

12. Paul's Last Message

Second Timothy is the last writing we have from Paul's hand and was written in Rome in his last imprisonment.

It is his farewell letter to his young associate, the charge of an old retiring pastor to his young successor.

He lays a heavy responsibility on young Timothy and charges him in terms of the great verities of Christian truth.

He warns him of coming defections from the faith, and they did come in swarms of heresies in the ancient church and are coming yet.

He speaks of himself as " already being offered," literally pouring out the last drops of his life-blood in the service of Christ. But he is greatly comforted and strengthened with the crown of righteousness which is now his reward.

In a few final pathetic words he arranges his affairs, shows how human he is to the last, and then his pen dropped and we have no more from his hand.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give the principal steps in Paul's life from its beginning to its end.
2. What were the chief characteristics of his personality?
3. How does Paul rank as a letter writer?
4. To what extent or in what ways can we follow his steps?

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